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Q. 3478, P. 50

THE LAW OF THE LAND,

LONDON IN THE LAST CENTURY,

A Drama,

IN THREE ACTS.

(FOUNDED ON FACT.)

LONDON

PUBLISHED BY W. KENNETH, DRAMATIC REPOSITORY,
BOW STREET, COVENT GARDEN, G. BERGER, 10,
HOLYWELL STREET, STRAND.

To be had of all Booksellers, and in the Theatre on the nights of Performance.

1837.



THE LAW OF THE LAND,

OR,

LONDON IN THE LAST CENTURY;

A Drama,

IN THREE ACTS.

(FOUNDED ON FACT).

BY W. H. WILLS,

Member of the Dramatic Authors' Society.

FIRST PERFORMED AT THE ROYAL SURREY THEATRE,
August 21st, 1837.

CORRECTLY PRINTED FROM THE PROMPT BOOK, WITH ENTRANCES,
EXITS, ETC. CORRECTLY MARKED.

LONDON: †

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**MARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY
FROM
THE BEQUEST OF
EVERT JANSEN WENDELL
1918**

Lewis and Co. Printers, 16, Frith Street, Soho.

TO

T. P. COOKE, Esq.

MY DEAR SIR:

To you I owe the kindness of having introduced a former Drama of mine upon the stage; to you, therefore, I have the pleasure of inscribing my latest effort;—a poor, though sincerely paid, compliment.

The subject of this piece—that of the life and unhappy end of a celebrated Doctor of Laws—was suggested to me by the proprietor of the Surrey Theatre; and I hesitated for some time ere I attempted to work upon it,—first, because I felt that my limited dramatic experience was not equal to the task; and secondly, because I feared that when finished it would do me little credit on the score of moral taste. The vanity inseparable from authorship, however, overcame the first difficulty, and the other I conquered by referring to the many precedents furnished me by former Dramatists, many of whose plays are founded upon similar events; and which are seldom performed without exercising a powerful and salutary influence over the minds of the audience.

That good *moral* effects are to be wrought upon the mind by stage performances, no one can be better aware of than yourself, who have ever been successful in producing them. The mixture of thoughtlessness, high honor, good heartedness, and patriotism, which forms the characters you have arrived at such eminence in personating, renders their actions and sentiments

so far removed from those of the stilted hero, as to make them excellent and practicable examples; because, from their extreme naturalness, as you pourtray them, their best traits are easy of imitation; and there can be little doubt that many an effectual lesson of prudence, constancy, and discipline, has been learnt from your performances, and from the acting of others equally eminent in the different walks of the Drama. Hence, I have spared no research in endeavouring to form a correct estimate of the character of the unfortunate individual who is the subject of this play, that I might endeavour to make his unbounded charity and benevolence worthy of imitation, and show how easily the best natures may be entrapped into crime, unless solidly imbued with honesty, prudence, and sound principle. If in any one instance, a good effect is produced by witnessing the "Law of the Land" I shall be sufficiently consoled for the censures I may be open to for want of *taste*.

Such censure I have already received. Long before the piece was produced an article appeared in the COURT JOURNAL headed "Dr. Dodd done for the Drama;" which, under the garb of facetiousness, put forth as many mis-statements, and as much injustice, as it is natural to suppose any writer would be guilty of who pretends to give an account of a production he had never seen. I am informed that the "correspondent" is a dramatic author, from whom such an article did not come with the best grace; for, besides having brought similar subjects on the stage himself, he ought not to have gratuitously come forward—being a dramatist of established reputation—to throw difficulties across the path of a young and struggling aspirant, who will doubtless deserve, and have to feel, the wholesome strictures of *fair* criticism, during his probation for public favour. From my answer to the article alluded to, (handsomely inserted by the Editors of the Court Journal,) I make the following extract, to show my reasons for originating a Drama upon events that might be thought to have occurred at a time hardly remote enough from the present to be acted on the stage.

“The pitch of intellectual refinement to which this age has arrived is too superlative to tolerate the heated extravagancies of fancy, or the glowing vagaries of imagination. Every work acted or printed, or both, must, at least, be founded on *fact*. Novels are no longer unblushingly published as attenuated falsehoods in five volumes, but must owe their origin to “certain extraordinary events in a certain family high in the rolls of nobility,” or end their career where it begins—in unread paid-for paragraphs and undisturbed booksellers’ shelves. No murder, matricide, parricide, fratricide, infanticide, or suicide, dare be admitted into modern romance, that has not been sworn upon affidavit in the olden time. Five-act plays *must* be historical, and melo-dramas undoubtedly authentic.

Deeply impressed with these opinions, I undertook the task proposed to me by my patron of the Surrey. Sophocles, I cogitated, “improved”—to use a conventicle phrase—upon the crimes of Œdipus; Euripides on the misfortunes of Prometheus; and Lillo reformed the tender consciences of till-robbing apprentices by the example of George Barnwell; why, then, should I hesitate to feed the moral taste of a refined public by “doing Doctor Dodd for the drama?”

I fear, my dear sir, that not only you but the public will charge me with presumption for bringing forward during the action of the plot some of the great literary characters who flourished in “the Last Century;” but it has been my aim to introduce them so unobtrusively, as not to evince any attempt at delineating their wit and genius by the dialogue allotted to them.

I must not forget to thank you for having introduced me to Mr. Davidge—a gentleman whose friendship I highly esteem.

Believe me to be

My Dear Sir,

Your’s sincerely,

The Author.

PROLOGUE

BY MRS. CORNWELL BARON WILSON.

Spoken by Mrs. R. Honner, in the dress of a Counsel.

My luds and ladies—met to form the jury :—
I'm specially instructed to conjure ye,
To hear me for my client ;—I beseech
Five minutes patience for my "maiden" speech.

We are a trembling author in this cause,
Who draw our present *action* from the laws.
"The laws!" methinks, some learned brother says,
"Wouldst turn the book of statutes into plays?
Blackstone, to *fire* our sympathies invoke,
Melt us with *Burn*, and warm our hearts with *Coke*?
Why next to play the penal code you'll strive,
Or turn the well-known 'six acts' into '*five*.'"—(*crosses*)

Wait, learned brother, e'er you so decide,
And hear our author on the other side.
By way of something new with interest rife,
He chose to take his scene from *actual* life ;
A deeper lesson hoping thus to teach,
Than any Fiction's airy grasp could reach.
To build the fabric that his story rears,
From the crushed ruins left of former years—
To tread with daring step on hallowed ground,
Record the past, yet no survivor wound—
Has been no easy task. Our cause we trust,
Ladies, to you, who're ever more than just.
Give us a *locus standi* in your smiles,
Favour from you each anxious fear beguiles ;
And should your lords not think the verdict right,
We'll move for a new trial every night.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

IN ACT I.

AS PERFORMED AT THE SURREY THEATRE, AUGUST 21ST, 1837.

<i>Sir Peregrine Platitude</i>	MR. DAVIDGE.
<i>Abel Dodsworth</i>	— COOPER.
<i>Henry Fielding</i>	— E. F. SAVILLE.
<i>Lewis Robson</i>	— LYON.
<i>Primmer</i>	— ELVIN.
<i>Nym Nabs</i>	— R. HONNER.
<i>Samuel Scrag</i>	— ASHBURY.
<i>Solomon Snail</i>	— W. SMITH.
<i>Officers, Guests at Mitre Tavern, Chairmen. Company at Ranelagh, &c. &c.</i>	
<i>Lucy Primmer</i>	MRS. R. HONNER.
<i>Amelia Platitude</i>	MISS GRANT.
<i>Flounce</i>	— MARTIN.
<i>Hebe Hops</i>	— PARKER.

Ladies at Ranelagh, &c. &c.

CHARACTERS IN ACTS II. AND III.

AFTER AN INTERVAL OF SEVERAL YEARS.

<i>Abel Dodsworth</i>	MR. COOPFR.
<i>Lewis Robson</i>	— LYON.
<i>Primmer</i>	— ELVIN.
<i>George Charlton—in love with Olivia</i>	— DIXON.
<i>Aaron Wolf, a Jew Money-broker</i>	— MORELLI.
<i>Sharps, a Black-leg</i>	— DIXIE.
<i>Nym Nabs—a Bow-street Runner</i>	— ASHBURY.
<i>Samuel Scrag, a beggar—and then an Officer</i> ..	— R. HONNER.
<i>Solomon Snail—a Constable</i>	— W. SMITH.
<i>Dr. Pozz</i>	— DIBDIN PITT.
<i>Mr. Bozz</i>	— CULLEN.

Groups at Gaming House, Gamesters, &c.

<i>Lucy Dodsworth</i>	MRS. R. HONNER.
<i>Olivia</i>	MISS COLLET.
<i>Amelia Platitude—a Magdalen</i>	— GRANT.
<i>Flounce—a Fashionable Milliner</i>	— MARTIN.
<i>Queen Charlotte</i>	MRS. DALY.

Ladies, Work Girls, &c. &c.

Francis Spalding.
1875

THE LAW OF THE LAND.

A C T I.

SCENE I.

Interior of the Mitre Tavern, large folding doors at the back, which when opened discover a passage leading into Fleet Street. NYM NABS and SAM SCRAG at table, drinking, R. H. HENRY FIELDING, LEWIS ROBSON, and three others, at another table, L. H., at which HEBE HOPS stands, as if taking reckoning. FIELDING's finger under HEBE's chin. Gents point to her as they sing.

GLEE AND SOLO.

- FOUR GENTS.** Hebe's eyes are diamonds bright,
Sparkling under fringe of jet ;
Hebe's teeth are pearly white,
Under rows of ruby set.
- HEBE.** Words so fine ne'er pay a score,
Are only meant to tease, sir,
Pray, beguiling jests give o'er—
So nine and fi' pence, please, sir.
- FOUR GENTS.** Hebe's lips are coral cups
Brimming o'er with nectared bliss,
Panting, pouting, love inspiring
Seem to woo the willing kiss.
- HEBE.** Words, &c.
- FOUR GENTS.** Hebe's cheeks are dimpled so,
When she smiles, her power we feel ;
As gold her hanging ringlets show,
Tho' faith ! her tongue's as sharp as steel.

FIELDING comes forward, inebriated, with purse.

FIELD. Nine and fi' pence ! 'Sblood wench, would'st rob us ?
Have we not already coined our brains for thee ? Has not our poesy
turned thy lips unto coral, thy teeth into pearls, thine eyes into
diamonds ; and though thy hair is jet black, have we not violated the
muse for thy sake to make gold of it ? What more would'st have ?

HEBE (*curtseys*) Nine and fi'pence, please sir?

FIELD. And no abatement for ready money? Not so much as one drop of nectar from those lovely lips?

HEBE. Nectar, sir? we don't sell it; if Malmsey will serve, a glass is at your service, for all it is five shillings for the pint.

FIELD. I'll give thee ten for one sip of thy nectar; here take the reckoning. (*as he gives cash, attempts to kiss her.*)

NABS. (*aside to SCRAG*) A fool and his money soon parted! eh, Sam? Now mark, for the honor of thief-craft, what he haggles for I'll steal! [*Kisses HEBE, she screams and runs off, U. E., R. H.*]

FIELD. 'Sdeath, sir, an insult; Robson!—(*to NABS.*)—Choose thy friend, and draw on the instant.

[ROBSON *comes forward.*]

NABS. (*aside to SCRAG*) Pocket the spoons and bottle up thy courage; stand by, stand by.

[SAM *steals spoons and whips up beside NABS.*]

SCRAG. Damn it Nym, I thought we came here disguised as gemmen on the low toby; and now you've put the kybosh on the whole fake. Here, take the swag. (*offers spoons behind back.*)

NABS. Ass! have I not kissed a wench and got up a quarrel? If I can only draw blood from yon drunken cull, we shall pass for noblemen.

FIELD. Draw, sir.

ROB. Nay, nay, be cool; you're not in a fit state to fight.

FIELD. Come on Sir—but first, your name?

NABS. Nym Nabs.

FIELD. Profession?

NABS. (*drawing fiercely*) Arms!

FIELD. Your rank?

NABS. Captain.

SCRAG (*aside*) Of as pretty a gang of pad coves as ever cried "Stand!"

NABS. (*takes spoons from SAM.*) Permit me,—Lieut. Scrag, my friend. (*introduces SCRAG.*)

Enter SIR PEREGRINE PLATITUDE in sedan chair,—D. in F.

FIELD. So we're interrupted,—Who's here?

SIR. P. What, at odds? with drawn swords? Come, come, no more o'this. Quietness is the best noise believe me. Broiling, is but quarrelling at the best. Put up—put up.

FIELD. What, put up with an insult?—Never! Now, come on.

[FIELDING and NABS *cross swords, ROBSON draws, and strikes up.*]

ROB. This is no place for broils. Put up Fielding—I'll arrange this matter; nay, nay, you shall be satisfied. (*aside to NABS*)—Fool, to broil at *this* time. Sit quietly and listen—ere you are six hours older, you shall be £50. richer. Remember our agreement—*Now* you are to fulfil it. The old knight's daughter once mine, your fortune is made. (*aloud*)—As you please, sir! Pancras Fields in five hours. My friend shall be punctual. Swords of course.

[Retires to FIELDING and SIR P.]

NABS. (*aside*) Ay and pistols too, if they don't surrender quietly.

SIR P. (*looking at watch*) Half-past six, and no Dodsworth. Well, I generally find that when a man is after his time, he is by no means punctual—(*they all sit.*)

FIELD. Dodsworth! why Abel Dodsworth is worth waiting a week for. For'egad he has the rascaldest good humor in all London. Hast seen his last paper in the Covent Garden Journal?

ROB. Moral and mawkish; and quite out of place in thy periodical Jest Book. Poor Abel, he is too sentimental for a man of the world, and not too learned for a scholar.

SIR P. A worthy fellow for all that; but I did not know that he was a friend of yours.

FIELD. A most particular one. Don't you hear how he abuses him?

ROB. He is engaged heart and soul, in some low love affair. A printer's daughter!

SIR P. (*surprised*) Ah!

ROB. And I shouldn't wonder if the virtuous dog marries the girl!

FIELD. Serve him right, if she love him; but, gentlemen, having this little affair on hand 'tis time we retired. You will be punctual, sir—(*to NABS*) and, you also, Robson;—and hark here, a word of advice before I go. As you value the honor of being my second—don't—don't get drunk.

[*Takes a gold headed cane, hanging it carelessly over his arm by the loop and tassel. As he passes bows to NABS. SCRAG gets up and bows awkwardly, placing his foot upon the ferule of the stick as it trails along. Exit FIELDING D. in F. leaving stick behind. SCRAG unscrews head.*]

SCRAG. Gold and no mistake. (*passes it to NABS, ROBSON following FIELDING to where NABS is seated.*)

ROB. Never fear me—I'll be punctual! For the present, farewell! Now Nabs attend—(*aside to NABS.*) Take your cue from our conversation. The old Knight and his daughter travel to Hampstead to-night with some property—that you may keep, but the girl must be my share—and d'ye hear, no blood.

NABS. None, none; I hope the old'un will bleed freely of his own accord. [ROBSON *sits beside* SIR PEREGRINE.]

ROB. And now Sir Peregrine, as we are alone, permit me to allude to a subject in which my whole happiness is concerned. It is not, I believe, unknown to you that I love your daughter, deeply, passionately, —that she is not indifferent to me.

SIR P. Mr. Robson, as a companion over the bottle, as a guest at the table, I am ever happy of your society; but I must tell you frankly that I covet no nearer alliance.

ROB. Sir!

SIR P. Nay my friend, do not chafe; for I often observe that when a man gets into a passion, he is seldom cool: you are, I admit, a most respectable, talented young gentleman; but, sir, your pecuniary resources are at present—

ROB. Limited, you would say; my circumstances may improve.

SIR P. (*takes snuff*) "May"!

NABS. (*apart to SCRAG*) Look, Sam, look, Diamonds! keep your eyes open.

ROB. Ay sir, and will improve; my practice as an attorney daily increases; I have, intrusted to me; many causes.

SIR P. But few effects I fear; don't be affronted Robson—my determination as regards you and my daughter is not the result of a few years experience, and Amelia's fortune must find an equivalent; she must marry a man with *some* money: now I have often observed that when persons like yourself, are not overburdened with cash, they generally turn out to be poor.

ROB. Well, Sir Peregrine, if such be your resolve, I must, as a man of honor, bow to it, however such acquiescence may lacerate my feelings—(*pretends emotion, looking towards NABS*) I think you return with your daughter to night?

SIR P. The carriage is ordered to call for us at my sister's by eleven. (*ROBSON attracts NABS' attention.*) Amelia is gone to see Garrick in Richard to night. Foregad, 'tis nearly seven and Dodsworth is not arrived (*pulls out his watch*).

NABS. Is it gold Sam?

SCRAG. It's all right. The snuff-box and ticker is worth the crack, let alone the blunt vashall collar.

ROB. In the present state of excited feeling, I may, perhaps, be wrong in remarking that Abel Dodsworth has been a constant visitor at Platitude House lately. Beware, beware, Sir Peregrine, how you thwart the affections of a beloved daughter. Believe me, Dodsworth is not worthy of the angelic Amelia. Nay, he is, to my knowledge, engaged in an amour with a person far below his own rank.

SIR P. Ha! ha! my experience in the world is not to be deceived. You and he are rivals, and I always observe that when men are rivals in love they don't keep the best terms with each other.

ROB. (*abruptly*) You return to Hampstead by the usual road to night, Sir Peregrine—(*again attracts NABS' attention.*)

SIR P. We do.

NABS. (*aside to Sam.*) That's your sort! The Pancras pikeman is in our pay, and 'twill be as snug a piece of toby work as ever was done. Do you go and tell him to look out for a char'rot—green picked out with white. I know it—and to shut the gate directly it comes; about eleven o'clock, d'ye hear, and wait yourself there till I come.

SCRAG. I'm off—don't see any more spoons, do ye?

NABS. No, no! cut—cut off to the pikeman.

[*Exit SCRAG, D. in F.*]

ROB. Why, Sir Peregrine, the very fact of Dodsworth's want of punctuality on this occasion must prove his utter insensibility to Amelia. Were I in his fortunate situation, I should have flown on the wings of expectation to meet the father of my future bride.

SIR P. Tut, tut, you dog! I know where he is. Poo, poo—you can't deceive my experience; when a man is not present why it often happens he is somewhere else; and *where* is Dodsworth d'ye think? I'll be bound I can tell you. Why squiring Amelia at the play to be sure.

ROB. Rather say,—and I speak with some knowledge of the fact—rather say, undermining the affections of unsuspecting virtue—tampering with innocent poverty.

Enter DODSWORTH, D. in F.

ROB. (*with an appearance of great cordiality*) Ah! my dear Dodsworth, you have been anxiously expected for the last hour. Where have you been staying?—(*takes his hand.*)

DOD. (*takes SIR P.'s hands also*) Foregad, Sir Peregrine, you must forgive me;—you *will* forgive me when I relate the cause of my being so long absent.

SIR P. We'll excuse you, for I have frequently observed, that when a man is in love he generally is "absent"—all day long.

DOD. Alas!—(*ROB. goes up to NABS, whispers.*)

SIR P. No apologies. How did Garrick act?—but the play can't be over. You saw Amelia safe I suppose with her aunt?

ROB. (*to NABS aside*) Yes, yes, it must be so—she must be mine to night. Have all ready—beside the church—mind, you're sure the man at the turnpike will be true.

NABS. As Jack Ketch to the gallows.

ROB. Away, away—let all go well and your fortune is made.

[Exit NABS, D. in F.]

SIR P. Then I suppose you've been at another theatre.

DOD. I have indeed witnessed a drama, but one of painful reality—its scene, a prison; its characters, misery, oppression, and despair—though, thank heaven, at last brought to a happy conclusion.

SIR P. Faith I'm glad on't, for I hate those miserable catastrophes. But I have generally noticed, that when there's a drama, there's a plot—a story—let's hear yours.

DOD. You shall, but not gratis I promise you; one guinea each, if you please, gentlemen.

SIR P. You are a very good actor no doubt Abel, but one can see Garrick for five shillings.

DOD. Well, you shall hear my story first and pay afterwards, which I intend you to do by way of subscription.—On Thursday last, I had occasion to call on my printer; I found his office deserted; and, on entering his dwelling room, beheld a scene that struck me at once with pity and horror. The apartment was stripped of every article of furniture; and on the floor was seated a girl in an agony of grief—lifting her in my arms, I beheld features of the most inspiring loveliness.

ROB. (*aside to SIR P.*) The identical wench I told thee of.—Proceed, you interest me much.

DOD. She was the printer's sister. My heart swelled with indignation at the tale of wrongs she repeated. Her brother had innocently printed a libel on some influential member of the government. An action at law, with all the horrors of executions and imprisonment, followed; while the real offender, the anonymous scribbler who penned the libel, has never come forward to avow it—(*with warmth, addressing himself to ROBSON.*)

ROB. Sneaking scoundrel!

DOD. Beware friend, beware *whom* you call names. This man was lately rotting in jail, and his beloved sister deprived of home, her only protector, and even of common sustenance; drooping into an early grave through the cowardice of a dastardly libeller.

Rob. 'Gad, wouldn't it be a glorious feat to find the fellow out?

SIR P. That will, I am sure, be a difficult task; for one generally finds that when a man writes anonymously, he don't want his real name to be known.

Dod. (*bitingly to Robson*) The original manuscript of the libel happens at this moment to be in my pocket.

SIR P. I am glad to hear it—very—for Dodsworth (and you see the advantage of knowing a man of experience in the ways of the world) if you or I know the hand, why 'tis ten to one but we find out the writer!

Dod. You speak like an oracle, Sir Peregrine; I do know the hand.

Rob. Faith that's lucky; who's is it?

Dod. (*with emphasis*) Yours!—(*shows papers, all start, Robson is confused*).

SIR P. So! a pretty son-in-law I might have been honored withal.

Dod. Robson, I do not wonder at your surprise, it is doubtless equal to mine, when I first saw this paper and witnessed its terrible consequence; of which, I presume, you were till now ignorant.

Rob. Indeed, indeed, I was.

Dod. Come, come, don't be cast down man about it—and don't be too hard on ministers again without duly attaching your autograph. All is well now; Primmer is released, and his lovely sister by this time made happy. I raised enough money to procure his discharge, and it is lucky for your feelings Robson, that you can still repair the injury the poor man has sustained—by assisting him to resume that comfort and station which you heedlessly robbed him. You will do this?

Rob. I will—I will.

Dod. And now, gentlemen, my tale is told—my play is over. And, as "a bargain's a bargain," two pounds two if you please. Well if I am not to take your subscriptions now, I suppose I must book them—(*takes out tablets and writes*.) Sir Peregrine Platitude, one pound one; Lewis Robson, Esquire, one pound one.

SIR P. But did you not say you had already emancipated the debtor.

Dod. Truly; but the case of Primmer has made me acquainted with a few others of equal hardship, though many of them more easily satisfied. Ah! my friends, we *hear* enough of the horrors of a debtor's prison; but we should see them, to open our hearts effectually to the cause of charity. Many an honest man is at this moment rotting in jail, whose only crime is poverty, and whose creditor, because he can't pay seems determined he shan't so locks him out from all hope, and ruins him for the sake of forty shillings. Now we three, simple as we stand, I intend shall form the nucleus of a society for the relief of these poor debtors. So, come along with me.

SIR P. Whither would you drag us?

Dod. To prison, to be sure! and if you know a dozen others with a taste for the pure delight of relieving distress, I'll make every soul of them as happy as kings—at a guinea a head. Come, to prison,
[*Exeunt D. in f.*]

SCENE II.

An Apartment. Practicable closet-door in flat. Dressing glass, table, toilette, &c. Enter FLOUNCE, R. H., 1 E.

FLO. (*speaks rapidly*) Well, if there is any one thing I do hate, detest, and abominate, more than another, it is to be left single, solus, and alone, all by one's self, without an individual to talk to. There's my young missus come from home to go to the play, and all the folks belonging to the house are gone too. Well! I hate the play—one can't talk—the folks on the stage have it all to themselves—why the last time I was in the gallery, only because I chatted a little to my dear sweetheart Solomon Snail, they cried out "Silence!" "Turn her out!" "Throw her over."—Dear Solomon, I only wish he was here now; how I would converse, chatter, and talk to him. I hope Miss Amelia will make haste or old Sir Peregrine will pop in and spoil the meeting I have planned between her and Mr. Robson. As for her other lover, Dodsworth, he is a mean fellow; why he has not given me so much as a paltry guinea, not above ten times these three months; I'm glad missus hates him!

SOLOMON SNAIL *peeps in.*

SOL. Ah! there she is talking away to her dear, dear, little self like a parrot in prison—(*goes up, taps FLOUNCE on the shoulder*).

FLO. O lord, oh!

SOL. What not know me.

FLO. Solomon? why what in the name of every thing that's marvellous, wonderful, and astonishing, brings you here?

SOL. (*pulls out his staff*) Business.

FLO. Lauk! I hope you dont mean to take me up?

SOL. To be sure I do—come to take you up in my arms.

FLO. And why don't you? you are so slow about everything.

SOL. You wont give me time. (*embraces her*).

FLO. Well, but who have you come to take up? Who, what, and where are they? Oh, do tell us all about it?

SOL. Give me time and I will.

FLO. Oh, do, do; I'm expiring, fainting, and dying, to know.

SOL. Well then, certain parties—

FLO. There, there, there you go again, with your certain parties; I hate "certain parties." Tell us their names, designation and cognomen.

SOL. But you wont give me time! besides aint I a constable?

FLO. Yes, and a special constable you are too—

SOL. Then would you have me blab the secrets of my office?

FLO. To be sure I would!

SOL. Well, listen. Certain female parties this evening that belong to a certain tavern in Fleet Street, told me that certain murders were being done by certain parties in the coffee-room; well, when I got there I was—

FLO. Too late of course—

SOL. Why they wouldn't give me time; but when I did get there, I learnt that a certain novel writing party wanted to kiss certain pretty waitresses, whereupon certain other parties jumped up, sword in hand, and stole the aforesaid kiss; thereupon certain third parties interfering, certain aforementioned murders were deferred for three hours, to be done and executed in a duel, when all parties are to meet to break the peace of his most gracious Majesty, contrary to the statute in that case made and provided, and in defiance of the laws of the King, his crown, and dignity.

FLO. Lauk! but how does all that bring you here?

SOL. I expect to meet certain third parties, whom I want to take up.

FLO. For goodness, gracious sake, tell me who they are?

SOL. Mum! don't tempt me. Consider my office—mustn't divulge.

FLO. What, attempt to hide, conceal, or keep a secret from me? (*knock at street door.*)—Oh, lauk! oh, dear. Somebody's coming, what shall I do? Where can I hide you? Ha! this closet!—'Tis Lady Mopsey's store-room. Take care of the strong waters, they are kept in a Chinese cupboard in the left hand corner. Mind you don't touch them—there get along. (*pushes him into the closet.*) Oh lauk! 'tis only young Missus after all.

Enter AMELIA PLATITUDE, L. H., I. E.

AME. Has Robson arrived?

FLO. No, my lady, *your* lover has not arrived, but as I was a sitting here just thinking of nothing and nobody, who should pop in but—

AME. No chatter Flounce, now, I beg.

Enter ROBSON, hastily, L. H., I. E.

ROB. Ah! my dear Amelia, at length we are alone.

AME. Not quite alone, dear Lewis— (*looks towards FLOUNCE.*)

FLO. Well I'm sure, as if I wanted to pry into, hear, or overhear their namby-pamby love making. I've got a sweetheart of my own, who says tenderosities to me, if I only give him time—I don't want—

AME. Flounce, leave us.

FLO. I've a soul above being a listener. Thank goodness, there's a famous large key-hole to this door though—Oh, my poor Solomon, I'm sure he'll die, expire, and go mad to be locked up. I don't know what to do, &c. (*Exit speaking fast, R. H., I. E.*)

ROB. Alas, dear Amelia, Sir Peregrine forbids me to continue my addresses to you—he has set his heart upon your becoming the bride of Dodsworth.

AME. Then there is no hope.

ROB. From him none—from yourself every hope.

AME. From myself?

ROB. Yes; act but with firmness and we may yet be happy.

AME. I know what you would hint, Robson; but, no—I dare not be yours without my father's consent. My fortune is entirely at his disposal and without it—

ROB. We might still be blessed in each other's affection. Oh! Amelia, could you but feel the pangs which Sir Peregrine's refusal cost me, you would at least pity my sufferings.

AME. Dodsworth will be here soon—our time is precious—he is to accompany us to Ranelagh to-morrow morning.

ROB. My rival!

AME. Not your rival in *my* affection, dear Lewis; he is generous and good—as a friend I esteem him much—let him be your friend also.

ROB. Never! he has thwarted me in all my views; in politics, love, in all things—and although I regard him with a show of complacency, his pretensions to you are enough to make me hate him.

AME. He will, he must resign them.

ROB. Never! he has sworn not to do so.

AME. Alas!

ROB. (*aside*) Yes it must be so; the more difficulties that seem to impede our union, the more easily will she consent to elopement; her fortune once mine—

AME. Oh! Lewis, into what misery will my father's cruelty plunge us.

ROB. (*aside*) This is the favored moment!—Dearest girl, happiness—permanent happiness, may be ours—one bold step—

AME. How?

ROB. Amelia, my love can no longer brook delay; this interview may be our last—decides our weal or woe for ever. One word from your lips, and—in short—all is prepared for our immediate flight.—(*places his arm round her waist*)—[*Enter SIR PEREGRINE and DODSWORTH, L. H., 1 E.*—(*aside*)—Confusion on this interruption.

SIR P. How? you here, sir?

DOD. Robson! Excellent faith! Oh you cunning fox!—(*to Robson*)—Is *this* your pressing appointment?—this your agony of impatience to see the poor printer; to do the penitential, to kneel at his feet, and sue forgiveness for your anonymous injury? Pray Miss, hath he offended *you* anonymously, that we find him in such an imploring posture?

SIR P. By heaven! this is past a jest—(*to Robson*)—You broke from our company with a much more honorable excuse for leaving us than the true one—

ROB. Sir Peregrine, hear me.

SIR P. And, sir, I generally find that when a man digresses from the truth, he proves to be a liar,—a liar, sir!

ROB. (*half draws his sword*) How? But no! for your daughter's sake I spare you.

DOD. Nay friends—no hard words—nor, least of all, hard blows.

SIR P. And you, Dodsworth, take this matter coolly enough, considering he is your rival.

DOD. Is he? then by Jove I'll have my revenge—(*advances to Robson*) So, sir, you presume to supplant me in the friendship of Miss Platitude?

SIR P. Friendship!

ROB. I aspire to her love.

DOD. Aspire! Have you obtained it?

ROB. I refer you for an answer to the lady herself. (DODSWORTH looks at AMELIA, she hangs her head.)

DOD. Good. Silence gives consent—(turns to ROBSON)—So, as Sir Peregrine will insist that I am your rival—we must have it out,—Sir, we must have it out.

AME. Gracious heavens!

ROB. When and where you please.

DOD. Then I please it to be here, and now!

SIR P. Retire, madam, this is no place for you.

DOD. Not for the world, Sir Peregrine; the lady must remain.

SIR P. What! proceed to extremities before my daughter?

DOD. Not only before—but with her. Look you, there is an evident mistake here. In the friendship and esteem I bear your daughter, I will yield to no man—not even to Mr. Lewis Robson.

ROB. (*drawing*) Then, Sir, I demand satisfaction.

AME. Oh, no—no, no—for my sake, Robson.

DOD. For your sake, Madam, he *shall* have satisfaction: a word with you, Sir Peregrine. (*Takes him aside.*)

AME. Oh, Lewis, for the love of mercy, do not embroil yourself! There may be bloodshed.

ROB. True; but it lies in your power to prevent it. Fly with me this night. Will you see me endanger my life—or will you crown our mutual love with bliss? One word decides.

AME. Cruel, terrible alternative—how shall I, how can I decide?

ROB. My fate hangs upon your lips. This instant speak—do you consent to be mine?

AME. I do, I do.—(*He leads her back as if explaining his plans.*)

SIR P. This is a severe blow. I have indeed mistaken your sentiments. In you, Dodsworth, I hoped to have found a worthy, kind, protector for my child.

DOD. And so you shall; and I will commence my new guardianship on the instant, by a step which will I believe ensure your daughter's happiness. Observe; (*advancing*) Mr. Lewis Robson, you have supplanted me in the esteem of Miss Platitude; you are ready to abide the consequences of course?

ROB. Perfectly.

DOD. Your hand upon it—(*join hands*).—Such a loss can only be atoned for by summary satisfaction, and I take it (nay man, look not so fierce, your hand, Madam, I pray,) and I revenge myself thus!—(*Attempts to join ROBSON'S hand to AMELIA'S.*)

AME. Generous creature!

SIR P. (*parts them*) Never! she shall not become the wife of an adventurer; a libeller, a slanderer—never!

DOD. Sir Peregrine you are too harsh, be not rash.

Enter FLOUNCE in an out-door dress, L. H. 1 E.

FLO. The carriage waits—(*aside*)—goodness gracious! here's a piece of work. So Sir Peregrine caught them; oh dear, here's a to-do—well I never—

SIR P. (*leading AMELIA off*) Come, madam; and for you, Sir, never dare enter my presence again.

ROB. (*apart to AMELIA*)—Remember your promise, Amelia, to-night!—[*Exit* SIR P. and AMELIA, R. H. 1 E.—FLOUNCE *judgets about closet door*.

DOD. Alas, Robson, "Fathers have flinty hearts!" Have'nt they? but cheer up, the old Knight shall have no peace from me 'till we have gained his consent—meet us at Ranelagh to-morrow morning. We shall all be there. I am to sleep at Platitude-house to-night—Tho' I must have an interview with Primmer first—mind, at Ranelagh; and do you hear, remember to be there by the merest accident in life. Come, come, keep up your spirits. For as Sir Peregrine would say, The best way to appear happy is not to wear a long face! Remember, at Ranelagh. [*Exit* R. H. 1 E.

ROB. Ha! ha! to-night she will be mine. Now then to seek Nabs and his gang [*Exit* L. H. 1 E.

FLO. Solomon, Solomon, oh dear! the carriage will go without me; I'm ruined, I'm ruined!

Enter SOLOMON drunk, D. in F.

FLO. Oh, you wretch! you have been drinking all Lady Mopsey's waters.

SOL. All? no I haven't, you wouldn't give me time—but I say mum! I've overheard such a plot. Certain parties are going to run away with other certain parties. I must go and take 'em up; but where's my warrant—(*pulls out paper and reads*)—So, Lewis Robson—

FLO. What, have you come to take him up? Why he has been gone this half hour—you are too late as usual.

SOL. Gone! well I can't help it, I must tell our deputy 'twas his own fault—he wouldn't give me time.

Enter servant, R. H., 1 E.

SER. Sir Peregrine is impatient to start, you must get off immediately.

SOL. (*embraces her*.) Good bye, Flounce—good bye.

[*As FLOUNCE exits, SOLOMON falls.*

FLO. Take care of him, John; I must be off, or missus will be in such a fuss, fantigue, and flusteration—good bye all. [*Exit*, R. H. 1 E.

SOL. I say, take my staff, will you—(*gives it*.)—Now d'ye hear, take me up—(*servant assists*.)—There now, be easy, give me time!

[*Exit*, L. H. 1 E.

SCENE III.

Road, Turnpike, and Gate-house, L. H., 2 E. with a View of Old Saint Pancras Church and Yard. Dark Stage. Clock strikes eleven.

Enter NABS, R. H. 1 E., dressed as a Highwayman; he steps cautiously across the stage and knocks at Gate House.

NABS. Sam, are you there?

SCRAG (*appears*.) All right my pippin.

NABS. Is the pikeman awake?

SCRAG. And no mistake, he's fly to the whole crack.—(*enters*.)

NABS. It has just struck eleven; in a quarter of an hour the drag will come up. All the lads are here, I hope?

SCRAG. Aye, aye, penned up in the pike-house, like so many sheep in Smithfield.

NABS. Mick must stop the post-boy—you attack the old 'un; while I take care of Robson's lady. Hark! some one comes—back, back—*(they retire.)*

Enter FIELDING, R. H., 1 E.

FIELD. The five hours have elapsed, and I cannot espy either principal or second—a plague say I upon all pretty waitresses, upon quarrel breeding beauties in general, and on Hebe Hops in particular. Where the devil's Robson?—*(looks off.)*

SCRAG. *(to NABS)* 'Tis the cull you quarrelled with at the boosing ken. This comes of our going about as gemmen.

NABS. Curse it, so he is. But stop, as he seems so anxious to fight 'twould be a pity to disappoint him. Clap on your mask while I pinion the bully. *(Masks, and stealing behind FIELDING, pinions him.)*

FIELD. Ha! help! Murder! Villains, I'm unarmed! *(SCRAG steals his watch and rapier.)*

NABS. *(presenting pistol.)* Another word and you are a dead man. Have you cleaned him out Sam?

SCRAG. Polished him off famous, I've grabbed his ticker and boned his blunt.

FIELD. Rascals, unhand me.

NABS. You're sure you have got all?

SCRAG. All.

FIELD. Release me I say.

NABS. *(releasing him)* With the greatest pleasure in life, Sir.

FIELD. Pon my soul you are extremely polite.

NABS. I'm sure I need not hint to a gentleman of your figure in the world, the necessity of keeping this little accident secret for the next two hours—allow me to return your sword—for should one breath on the subject escape your lips within that period, take my word you will need it. Have we your parole of honor to that effect?

FIELD. You have;—gratitude for the honor of having been robbed by so gentlemanly a ruffian would alone seal my lips. Have I permission to depart?

NABS. Assuredly;—allow me to wish you a very good evening and a pleasant walk.

FIELD. Ceremonious soundrel!

[Exit, R. H., 1 E.]

NABS. Ha! ha! that's what I call doing the thing handsome.

SCRAG. Scrag me if you an't a honor to the profession.

Enter ROBSON hastily, L. H., 1 E.

ROB. Nabs are you there?

NABS. *(unmasking.)* Here, here;—are they coming?

ROB. The carriage will be here in five minutes—my post-chaise is concealed by yon hedge, beside those trees; secure the girl. I will be in the chaise to receive her from you. Only place her in these arms, and fifty pounds are yours. Remember, and lose no time.

[Exit hastily. R. H., 1 E.]

NABS. Call the lads Scrag; hark! I hear the hoofs of the prads on the hard road.

[SCRAG opens Gate-house. Enter Highwaymen, and exeunt with SCRAG, L. H., 2 E. NICK and another manent.]

NABS. (*cocking pistol*) Nick you are to stop the post-boy.—(*cracking of whip without.*) Ha! they are here. [*Exit NICK, L. H., 2 E.*] Shut the gate, now, quick—quick. [*Exit, L. H., 2 E.*]

Report of pistol without; screams, noise of scuffle, &c. &c.

Enter SCRAG and NICK, L. H., 2 E. dragging in SIR PEREGRINE PLATITUDE.

SCRAG. Come along old buffer! Now do take it quietly—(*rifles pockets.*) Collar the watch, Nick—(*takes watch.*) And here's the snuff box—(*gives it to Dick.*)

Enter FIELDING, R. H., 1 E.

FIELD. Ha! another robbery! (*he beats them off* R. H. 2 E.) Are you hurt, Sir?

SIR P. No, no, let us fly—or we may be murdered.

FIELD. Shelter is near; this way, this way. [*Exeunt, R. H., 1 E.*]

Enter NABS dragging AMELIA; she screams.

NABS. Hush! I'm your friend—your lover awaits you. Make no noise, or—

AME. Release me, villain!

Enter DODSWORTH, L. H. 2 E.

DOD. Ah! Amelia in their clutches. Release the lady scoundrel, ere I commit murder! (*he thrusts at NABS, who, to avoid the blow, leaves AMELIA; DODSWORTH beats him off* R. H. 2 E.) Ah! she has fainted; not a moment must be lost, or we may be attacked again; but hold, a lucky thought, we are near Primmer's cottage; thither will I bear my lovely burthen. [*Exit, bearing AMELIA* R. H. 1 E.]

SCENE IV.

Room in PRIMMER'S house, neatly furnished. Practicable door in F. Table, lighted candle, two chairs.

Enter PRIMMER and LUCY.

PRIM. Alas, Lucy, all is not well! one dreadful suspicion haunts my mind.

LUCY. Suspicion? have we not been raised from the lowest depths of wretchedness to hope and comfort, by the noble and generous Dodsworth? You would not be ungrateful?

PRIM. Oh, Lucy! you are young and inexperienced; while I, who have suffered so much from villainy, cannot but feel that Dodsworth's exertions in our behalf must have arisen in a motive—a design.

LUCY. Do I understand you aright? Do you attribute all his zeal and kindness to some unworthy cause?

PRIM. Frankly, I do.

LUCY. Then you are guilty of ingratitude, the worst, the vilest. Oh, brother! rob not such exalted benevolence of its virtue, by attributing it to evil motive. You cannot believe Dodsworth the perpetrator

of some subtle design, you dare not; no, believe him rather a man in whose heart shines the light of benevolence; whose mind, radiant with charity, delights in acts of the purest good; think of him as he deserves, and tremble at your ingratitude.

PRIM. Would to heaven I could but—

LUCY. What design, what motive can you suspect?

PRIM. You, *you* are his motive.

LUCY. I? no—no—no it cannot be.

PRIM. Tell me girl, and as you dread a brother's curse, answer me truly; has he not spoken to you of love? No hesitation.

LUCY. I scorn to hesitate—am anxious, proud to say, Dodsworth has spoken the language of love. But O! in words so pure, with looks so full of fervency and truth, that I would gladly resign to his keeping, my life; nay what is dearer to me, my honor.

PRIM. Alas, deluded girl! how shall I tell thee? how impart that—

LUCY. Speak, speak—relieve me from this torture of suspense.

PRIM. He is engaged to wed another.

LUCY. (*with emotion*) Impossible—it cannot be—you are deceived.

PRIM. Not so; 'tis well known that he is betrothed to Miss Platitude.

LUCY. Brother, beware how, upon the slight evidence of mere report, you blast a benefactor's, perhaps a sister's fame.

PRIM. I am convinced; listen! after my discharge from prison I had occasion to return thither; Dodsworth was there, possibly seeking out others who might possess pretty sisters. The father of his intended bride was with him; and I heard enough to satisfy even your doubts.

LUCY. No—no, I will not believe it. He would not deceive us thus.—(*aside*)—And yet I do not remember that he spoke to me of marriage; this purse too. I cannot believe him so base a villain.—(*calmly*)—Oh, brother! if your suspicion should prove unfounded; think for what horrible ingratitude you will have to answer. See, Dodsworth's generosity is boundless; behold this purse—

PRIM. (*snatches it from her*) Is the price of a sister's honor. Thus would I trample all such gifts in the dust. (*throws it down with violence.*)

LUCY. And I would cherish it as a token of him you so cruelly injure. (*attempts to pick it up.*)

PRIM. (*preventing her*) Touch it not, sister, I charge, I command you; it may contain the wages of infamy.

LUCY. Dodsworth is innocent, I would stake my life upon his truth.

[*During the struggle, enter DODSWORTH, bearing AMELIA in his arms.—D. in F.*

PRIM. Ah! what do I see? Dodsworth—a lady too;—by heaven! 'tis his intended bride: now sister are you satisfied?

[*On seeing DODSWORTH, LUCY covers her face with her hands, and sinks into her brother's arms.*

DOD. Help! shelter for a lady who has been robbed, and has fainted.

PRIM. Not here, sir; seek it elsewhere.

DOD. What, ungrateful man! deny assistance to a lady? one too in such a situation?

LUCY. (*rushing between them*) Never! I, even I, will protect her.

DOD. (*places AMELIA in chair*) What means this rude reception?

PRIM. (*looking at AMELIA.*) 'Twere easy to guess the cause, sir.

DOD. Easy indeed to believe you the most ungrateful of men.

PRIM. Mr. Dodsworth, for your kindness I am grateful—you have rescued me from prison; send me there again, sir; but oh! spare, spare a sister's honor.

LUCY. (*who has been trying to recover AMELIA*) Come, come lady, you are better now; let us retire to my chamber.—(*looking abstractedly at DODSWORTH*)—Can it be? Great powers! my heart will break.

[*Exeunt LUCY and AMELIA.*—R. H., 2 E.]

DOD. "A sister's honor?" 'Tis true that touched, captivated, by the patience, the meekness, with which she bore her own sufferings, and sympathized with yours, a passion sprung up in my heart. Sir, I love your sister.

PRIM. Alas, unhappy girl! and she returns your passion.

DOD. Such a declaration, at another moment, would have filled me with rapture; but now the utter unworthiness, the ingratitude of her brother, make me receive it with a feeling akin to sorrow.

PRIM. I can no longer conceal my thoughts. You have torn me from the fangs of the law; you have rescued me from ruin; but oh! such bounty would be dearly bought at the sacrifice of a sister's virtue.

DOD. And because I love, does it follow that I cannot do so with every honorable intention? can I not do an act of kindness to a brother, and, at the same time, love a sister, without making the one the price of the other? Really you must have been at some pains to conceive so elaborate a piece of villainy; and to attribute such baseness to one who deserves a small portion of your gratitude, is the height of folly and injustice.

PRIM. I can bear this no longer; in a word, are you not betrothed to—

DOD. Lucy Primmer; she is—

LUCY enters, R. H., 2 E.

LUCY. Thine for ever!—(*rushes into his arms*)—Kneel, brother, kneel, and ask forgiveness of one you have deeply injured. Miss Platitude has told me all.

DOD. Are your doubts satisfied now, sir? if not, reach that purse, which I see lying yonder, as yet unopened. In one end you will find fifty guineas, in the other, a note to your sister, fully explicit of my sentiments and intentions. And if you still remain sceptical, accompany us to Ranelagh to morrow, whither I intend to take my dear Lucy, to introduce her into society as my future wife.

PRIM. (*having opened purse, looks at paper*) 'Tis indeed as you state; pardon—pardon I implore you. I am ashamed, confounded; can you forgive me?

DOD. Can I Lucy, for my heart is in your keeping?

LUCY. For my sake—

DOD. Your hand Primmer.—(*takes hands.*)

PRIM. How can I atone for this injustice?

DOD. By being less suspicious for the future; for, I doubt not, your present feelings inflict a punishment more than adequate to your crime. And now, Lucy, look to your patient, while I seek Sir Peregrine, and our scattered party. To-morrow we meet at Ranelagh; and then for hymen and happiness!

Exit D. in flat.—Eseunt LUCY and PRIMMER,—R. H., 2 E.

SCENE V.

View of the exterior of Ranelagh. A public breakfast laid out on separate tables, at which groups of company are seated. An orchestra in Pagoda, filled with Musicians, L. H., 1 E. Servants handing about coffee, &c. FLOUNCE talking to a group of persons who are seated, R. H.

1ST LADY. Well Flounce, I'm dying to know the rest.

FLO. Oh, my lady, the most audacious robbery that could be—you'll believe me, upon my honor, conscience and veracity; they knocked down master, stole away missus, and—

GENT. What did they do to you?

FLO. Nothing! the imperent good-for-nothings, I only wish I'd caught 'em at it. Why do you know when they found out I was only a waiting maid, they said I'd nothing to lose—as if a poor maid isn't as well worth being ill-treated, robbed, and runaway with as a missus!

LADY. Hush! they are beginning a song.

Enter into Orchestra, Mr. BEARD.

BALLAD.

BY MRS. C. B. WILSON.

When shall the hour of our meeting be?
 When the nightingale breathes her melody;
 When twilight's tear the rose leaf wets
 Or night each starry watcher sets;
 When Nature is sleeping o'er land and sea—
 Then shall the hour of our meeting be!

When shall the hour of our meeting be?
 When our path is from prying gazers free;
 When slumber has shrouded the jealous eye,
 And no listening ear comes our greeting nigh;
 When Nature is sleeping o'er land and sea—
 Then shall the hour of our meeting be.

ROBSON comes down from U. E., R. H.

ROB. Curses on Dodsworth, again has he foiled my purpose. Pray heaven the fright of last night will not prevent Amelia from

coming. All is provided for our flight; already is her consent mine, and she will hardly retract it now. Once bound to me by the ties of wedlock her fortune must follow. Within this hour success will be mine.

FLO. O! Mr. Robson, such doings! Last night, just as the carriage had drove up to—

ROB. Flounce, I cannot hear your story now. Tell me, is Sir Peregrine here?

FLO. To be sure;—they have said in the newspapers, that he has been murdered, after killing about a dozen highwaymen! So he has come to show every body that he is not so dead as they have made him out.

ROB. And Amelia?

FLO. Is here too—and do you know—(*takes him aside, conversing.*)

NABS and SCRAG appear as in 1st dress.

NABS. What have you grabbed?

SCRAG. Not so much as a tea lapper.

NABS. Then plant yourself behind the old woman with the pink face; and d'ye hear, cut off her pocket! I saw her pay the waiter out of a purse full shiners..

SCRAG. All right my pippin—(*mixes with company.*)

NABS. While I go and flirt with that lovely girl yonder; she's got such a diamond necklace—(*retires.*)

ROB. (*leads AMELIA forward.*) Not a moment must be lost. My dearest Amelia, the chaise and four are at hand.

AME. Alas! Lewis, let us not be rash. Dodsworth has promised to use his influence with my father.

ROB. All will not avail;—Sir Peregrine's obstinacy is notorious; without this step our happiness will be lost. Come! come!

AME. Nothing but a parent's cruelty should urge me to such a step. [*Exeunt, R. H., 1 E.*]

Enter SIR PEREGRINE PLATITUDE from U. E., R. H., followed by FIELDING with newspaper.

FIELD. My dear Sir Peregrine, I heartily congratulate you on your newly gained honors.

SIR P. I have only been robbed, and I generally observe there's no great honor in that.

FIELD. You are immortalised in the Public Advertiser as a hero—behold! Why, Sir, you killed and wounded no less than twelve footpads.

SIR P. Well, now really I was not aware of it.

FIELD. Read, Sir, you will be edified. 'Sblood, the adventure of last night will afford bread and cheese to the garretters of Grub-street for the next week.

SIR P. (*taking paper.*) Now I usually notice that when the newspapers do exaggerate, one can place but little dependence on the truth of their statements. But have they not mentioned your part of the affair?

FIELD. Not a syllable; the rascals are envious—I am an author myself, and two of as trade, you know, Sir Peregrine—

SIR P. Ha! ha! very true—now let us have some coffee.

FIELD. For 'gad after slaughtering a host of highwaymen, you must need refreshment truly—but where is Miss Platitude.

SIR P. Faith that's more than I can say; for I ran away from the chatter of her long-tongued Abigail—but the coffee, the coffee. Hark! the singers are commencing.

Enter DODSWORTH with LUCY, U. E., R. H.

DOD. Sir Peregrine, I'm glad I've found you;—Fielding, your servant.

SIR P. A thousand thanks for the rescue of my daughter—but you are remiss.—(*points to Lucy.*)

DOD. Pardon, I beseech you, Sir Peregrine;—Mr Fielding, Miss Primmer—(*introduces her.*)

SIR P. Young lady, though you have robbed me of a worthy son-in-law, I am proud of your acquaintance. And I am sure you will excuse my taking the privilege of an old man, in saying, that possessing, as you do, the affections of so excellent a creature as Dodsworth, you are an extremely fortunate person.

FIELD. Not fortunate, Sir Peregrine, for the gifts of the blind goddess cannot fail to be attracted by so much beauty and innocence.

DOD. Bravo, Fielding! A capital sentiment for your new novel. But where is Miss Platitude? (*all sit at table. Music.*)

NABS and SCRAG come forward.

SCRAG. Well, I've grabbed the old 'oman's purse—while you've been idling your precious time along with that 'ere young gal with the diamonds.

NABS. The young woman *without* the diamonds you mean—they're here—(*shows them*)—you see, Scrag, in our profession we must sacrifice a little to the graces—(*takes a pinch of snuff out of SIR PLATITUDE'S box, with a conceited air.*)

SIR P. Confound those robbers! I've no snuff—which I generally observe to be the case when I am without a box.

FIELD. (*pointing to NABS.*) There is a gentleman who will accommodate you, no doubt.

SIR P. Will you oblige me, Sir?

NABS. With the greatest pleasure in life.

SIR P. (*starting.*) Fielding, that is very like my box. It *is* my box.—(*NABS looks at SIR P., starts, shuts up box and pockets it hastily.*)

SCRAG. (*aside.*) 'Tis the very rum old codger we robbed.

NABS. (*aloud.*) True, Lieutenant, I am bound to you for reminding me of a most pressing appointment, as you say at one o'clock.

SCRAG. Oh! wery uncimmon appointment; I'm blowed if it a'nt half-past—(*pulling out watch.*)

FIELD. Curse me if that is not my watch also.

NABS. Gentlemen your most obedient—our time's up.

FIELD. (*collars one with each hand.*) Your time is up indeed, and not too soon either—officer! officer!

SIR P. (*assisting.*) Officer!—(*Company all rise.*)

Enter SOLOMON SNAIL, with two others. U. E., R. H.

SOL. Well I'm coming, do give me time.—(*the two constables take charge of NABS and SCRAG*)—Which of you certain parties, is Sir Peregrine Platitude?

SIR P. I am.

SOL. Then, sir, I have to inform you, that being in a certain closet last night, in company with several choice spirits, I overheard certain female parties agree to elope with certain other parties.

SIR P. Speak plainly, sir.

SOL. Well then, your daughter intends to run away with—

(*Enter FLOUNCE.*—U. E., R. H.)

FLO. Oh, Sir Peregrine! Oh, Mr. Dodsworth! Oh, Solomon! Oh every body! Missus, young missus, has eloped, run-away, and gone off, with Mr. Robson.

OMNES. Eloped!

SOL. Lord bless you, I could have told you she intended to do that, four hours ago.

SIR P. And, scoundrel, why did you not?

SOL. Because I was—

FLO. Too late, as usual.

SOL. Well, but you *would* not give me time.

SIR P. Tell me girl, is all this true?

FLO. As true, as ever I'm standing, speaking, and conversing, at this very moment.

DOD. This is an imprudent, and a rash step; but you will forgive them, Sir Peregrine.

SIR P. (*with energy*) Never! May the curse of a forsaken father light upon them.

DOD. Moderate your anger, I beseech you; shall we follow them?

SIR P. That would be useless. My curse shall follow them to the grave. To the grave!—(*buries his face in his hands.*)

TABLEAU.

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

A C T II.

SCENE I.

Furnished room in DODSWORTH'S house; lights. Wine and water in bottles, rummers, wine glasses, &c. LUCY DODSWORTH seated R. OLIVIA sitting L. reading a book.

LUCY. Olivia, you must be tired of waiting up so long. 'Tis nearly three o'clock.

OLI. I think, dear Lucy, I could sit up all night, with so amusing a companion as "Joseph Andrews." I think Mr. Dodsworth knew the author.

LUCY. Yes, poor Fielding. His health and fortune failed him; and to recover the one, and economise the other, he went to Lisbon; where, alas, he died! Would Dodsworth had never gone abroad; for in Paris, he contracted a habit of gaming, which has grown upon him frightfully.

OLI. Well, well, that is a painful subject; let us change it from husbands to lovers.

LUCY. Of your lover, I cannot speak in terms of aught but hatred.

OLI. Of which? for it seems I have two.

LUCY. Of Robson. He it was who eloped with Amelia Platitude. Her father cast them off for ever! and when Robson learnt her fortune was sacrificed, he left her to perish in a foreign land. Sir Peregrine has since had the generosity to make my husband his heir.

OLI. I need no additional reasons for rejecting Robson; but my friendship for George Charlton, is—

LUCY. Friendship! call it by another name.

OLI. Well, dear madam; I will, and give the feeling its proper name in a song—and then to bed.

PASTORAL.

BY MRS. CORNWELL BARON WILSON.

On a bank of violets lying,
 Cupid slumber'd in the shade;
 Celia (nymphs are fond of prying)
 Curiously the boy survey'd!
 Now she smoothed each ruffled pinion,
 Now each feather counted o'er;
 And, at last, from Venus' minion
 Stole the many wings he wore!

Soon to Stephen she convey'd them,
 Who his flock was tending nigh;
 While her shepherd friend survey'd them,
 She on him the prize would try!
 Stephen's tongue began to soften
 As the plumes expanding move;
 Oh! fair Celia, FRIENDSHIP often
 BEAUTY'S power has turn'd to LOVE!

LUCY. Thanks, a thousand thanks; dear Olivia, good night.

OLI. Good night.—(*Exit with candle. R.*)

LUCY. Alas! none know the cares of a neglected wife, but those who feel them; and yet he loves me dearly; yes, Dodsworth's heart is still the same, though his propensity for show and extravagance, sometimes seems to win him from me. But, oh! his horrid fondness for gaming must end in ruin.—(*House clock strikes three*)—Hark! 'tis three o'clock, and still he is from home; some expedient must be resorted to, to stop his fatal propensity, and to save him from a gambler's fate.—(*knock at street door.*)

Enter DODSWORTH L. H. I E. hastily and pale. Lucy embraces him.
 Have you returned at last? why, why remain so long from home? for mercy's sake what has happened, that you glare so wildly on me?

DOD. Nothing, nothing; I have been unfortunate, deceived; some wine, some water, to cool this burning throat.

LUCY. (*rushes to table, and hands glass.*) Dear Abel, sit; calm yourself; here love, drink.

DOD. (*sitting*) Faithful Lucy, I am unworthy of thy untiring kindness; here, sit by me.—(*Lucy sits on stool beside him.*)—Bless thee my good, my guardian angel!—(*kisses her.*)

LUCY. Gracious powers! tell me, I implore thee, what has happened?

DOD. No, no, I dare not tell thee all.

LUCY. Am I then unworthy of your confidence?

DOD. Best of wives, thou art worthy of more than I can bestow; you shall know what has alarmed, and struck me with horror; on turning the corner of a street, I was accosted by one, clad in the garb of misery; conceive my terror and dismay, on beholding—

LUCY. Whom?

DOD. Amelia Platitude.

LUCY. No—no—I will not believe it, she has been long since dead; this is some trick to put me off from learning the real cause of your misery.

DOD. Oh! do not chide me dearest. Add not thy frowns to the frowns of fortune.

LUCY. (*rising*) Too well do I guess the source of this distraction—Husband you have been gaming!

DOD. (*starting up.*) Ha! some demon has divulged my secret—some villain in form of a friend. All—all are against me.

LUCY. Yourself is your only enemy; think not to hide such a secret from a wife's enquiring eye; that distracted air—those pallid features, too plainly tell the tale.

DOD. All then is over? my last hope is failing; the only support, the only stay to bear me up against impending ruin, is falling from

me—and you, my only comfort, behold me possessed of the demon of play, and hate me?

LUCY (*rushing into his arms*) No! no! no! Heaven forbid. Hate thee, husband! never, I have not loved thee so long and so tenderly to hate thee now. Come, come, rest here—collect your scattered thoughts; confide all to your Lucy.—(*they sit as before.*)

DOD. Well, well, dear Lucy, you shall—you shall know all. But oh! do not curse me!

LUCY. Banish such thoughts! No! no—I will love thee more dearly, more fervently, for thy misfortunes.

DOD. In one word then, we are ruined!—(*hides his face.*)

LUCY. Well, well; dearest you see I am not driven to despair. I—I—I can hear the worst calmly, without a tear or struggle.

DOD. To extricate myself from the pecuniary difficulties into which our too extravagant style of living has plunged me—I resorted to the gaming table, and madly staked my last guinea. My creditors are clamorous—to satisfy their demands is impossible!

LUCY. (*rising, looking steadfastly at DODSWORTH.*) Is that the worst Abel?

DOD. It is—it is?

LUCY. Then think me not cruel when I say that for me this is a blessed, a happy moment.

DOD. Ah!

LUCY. The crisis has, it seems, at last arrived—the storm has burst. The trembling suspense, the sleepless nights, I have endured in anticipating this result—are ended.

DOD. Alas! You have worse troubles to encounter.

LUCY. Oh no, Abel, we are *not* ruined—still we are rich in each others affection; one only thing remains to restore us to prosperity and happiness.

DOD. For the love of mercy, name it?

LUCY. That you forsake the gaming-table; you have been imprudent, but I have been otherwise; the lavish hand that has been ever open to help the needy, and to distribute wealth in entertaining false friends, has not been shut to me. I have saved a few hundreds unknown to you.

DOD. Hundreds? Thousands, would not meet the demands upon me.

LUCY. Patience! patience! dear husband, you forget that you are Sir Peregrine's heir; at his death, we shall have ample means; meantime we can find a humble, but happy home, on some foreign shore.

DOD. Bless you Lucy, bless you! you have, indeed, poured the balm of hope into a mind darkened with despair.

LUCY. See Abel, how little is lost by confiding in a faithful wife; this is but a cloud, obscuring our happiness, which bursts, only to make our sunshine brighter; come dearest, you shall begin a new and happy life.

DOD. And that I will. Weaned from the paths of extravagant ambition by the best of guides, a devoted, faithful wife!

[*Exeunt together*, R. H. 2 E.]

SCENE II.

*A Street.**Enter Amelia hurriedly, attired meanly,*

AME. Whither shall I fly for food and shelter? I am driven to despair. O Robson, to thee I owe these horrors! deceived by a false marriage, and then deserted in a foreign land; the victim of a father's curse, I have sunk into the lowest depths of misery. Whither shall I seek for aid? I have heard that my former servant has become a milliner. Flounce I will seek; time, and the hardships I have endured, have wrought such changes in my face, that she will not know me; I will ask for work.—(*noise without*)—Ah! that noise! I must leave this spot, or a prison might be my next abode.

[*Exit. L. H. 1 E.*]*Enter SOLOMAN SNAIL, dragging after him SAM SCRAG, dressed as a beggar, carrying a wooden leg. R. H. 1 E.*

SOL. Come along, I must take you up; so you thought you would not give me time, eh? and screwed off your wooden pin, to put the best leg forward: but I must see what certain parties at Bow Street will say to you.

SCRAG. Mercy, mercy; a wife and sixteen small kids. Let us go, and I'll stand summut handsome.

SOL. Let you go? I haven't time to do such a thing, you must be taken up; so come along quietly.

SCRAG. (*aside*) Here's nobody by, so I'll have a mill for it.—(*knocks SNAIL's hat over his eyes.*)

SOL. Help! murder! help!—(*runs about feeling for SCRAG; SCRAG is running off, L. and knocks against NYM NABS, who enters.*)—Help! rescue! murder!

NABS. Hallo, here, what's amiss? Oh! a prig trying to get away, I'll collar him.—(*seizes him*)—What's the row?

SOL. Why I wanted to take him up, and so he knocked me down.

NABS. 'Pon my soul! he's wery ungrateful—I'll soon make him sensible to kindness. (*SCRAG suddenly starts at NABS, they both look at each other steadfastly.*) Eh? no, is it?

SCRAG. Be scragged if it isn't.

NABS. Samuel?

SCRAG. What, Captain Nabs.

NABS. (*aside to SCRAG.*) But I say! mum! I'll make this all right. What has he been doing Mr. Constable?

SOL. Doing? why being a rogue and a vagabond; besides, he has been begging, and ha'nt got enough for a night's lodging about him, and certain magistrate parties do say that that's a crime as deserves hanging at least.

NABS. Well, we shan't trouble you Mr. Snail—I'll settle this business.

SOL. Will ye though? Then I shall have time to call on certain milliner parties.

NABS. I'll take care of the imposter. But I say, Snail, don't let me catch you creeping after Miss Flounce. Mind ye, I'm all right in that quarter.

SOL. You? Ah! I know better than that—why I have courted her for these twenty years.

NABS. Then why have you not married the Angel.

SOL. 'Cause she would not give me time—well, never mind, you take care of that party and I'll take care—devilish good care—of Miss Flounce.

[Exit. L. H.]

SCRAG. Well I'm in luck and no mistake—but I'm wery sorry to see that you've turned tail—how did it happen?

NABS. Why when we got lagged for that job at Ranelagh, they found I was a knowing cove, and gave me up some of my time, to wear this red waistcoat.

SCRAG. Couldn't you get me into the same line?

NABS. Why I can't say; what have you been at, since you came off the Thames?

SCRAG. Why the toby trade was over done, too many in it; so I took to cadgering, and turned honest.

NABS. Honest; I'm very sorry to hear that, for look ye, you'll never do for a Bow Street officer, with that stain upon your character.

SCRAG. Well it's very hard luck; and I'm very sorry.

NABS. Why you see, when one changes from a thief to a thief taker, we still do a job now and then, but in a snugger way. We officers rob by law; according to act of parliament; d'ye take? But never mind, come along with me, and we'll see if we can't reform this honesty out of ye; come along, and we'll talk it over, at the Cadger's Arms.

[Exit L.]

SCENE III.

Same as Scene II. DODSWORTH and ROBSON discovered with papers in earnest conversation

ROB. Inevitable ruin stares you in the face.

DOD. I know it does; but by the assistance of the best of wives, I am enabled to return its gaze, coolly, steadfastly: you are already aware of my determination.

ROB. What, will you steal away to France, and leave, behind, the character of a man, who flies from his creditors—the name of a common cheat?

DOD. No, no, they will not say that of me.

ROB. Listen; Miller, the bill-broker, holds your acceptance for three-thousand pounds, which falls due the day after to-morrow.

DOD. Fatal truth; Robson tempt me no further, I must fly; I cannot endure these terrors.—(rises)

ROB. Is this your boasted firmness? well, take the counsel of an inexperienced woman, in preference to the advice of a sincere friend, and mark the consequences; you retire abroad, and wait the death of old Platitude, whose heir you are; Miller presents his bill—it is dishonoured, noted—they make you a bankrupt, you are unable to appear to the commission, and are branded, posted over London as an outlaw!

DOD. These are horrors I did not foresee—I must not, dare not fly—but it is there no way?

ROB. There is a way! One which would end all your troubles at a nasterly stroke.

DOD. Oh! my best of friends, disclose—name it, I implore.

ROB. You are on the most intimate terms of friendship with Lord Chesterton—he would do any thing to serve you.

DOD. Alas! that resource is no longer available; he has lent me several hundreds already.

ROB. You mistake me. I do not mean that you should borrow any more money of him.

DOD. How then?

ROB. Are we alone?

DOD. Yes—yes—no one hears you.

ROB. Then listen to my plan. We must get his name to a bond for an amount equal to your emergencies.

DOD. That is impossible—his lordship would never sign such an instrument. (ROBSON comes close to DODSWORTH, speaks in his ear, after looking cautiously round.) We will sign it for him!

DOD. Sign?—sign?—Lord Chesterton's name?—his name to a bond?—do I understand you aright?

ROB. Yes—you do comprehend my meaning—nothing could be contrived with greater certainty, or less chance of discovery. Aaron Woolf will lend us a reasonable sum on the bond, and you will be provided with cash to meet it by the sale of your reversionary interest in Sir Peregrine Platitude's will, and none but ourselves can know our secret.

DOD. (*seizes ROBSON.*) Villain!—What would you goad me to—forgery—felony?

ROB. Ungrateful man, unhand me. Is it for this I have assisted you, negotiated your bills, raised money, and supported your credit?—but farewell—this is more than friendship strong even as mine can endure.

[*Going.*]

DOD. Forgive—forgive me, Robson—I mistook—I must have mistaken your meaning.

ROB. You have not mistaken me. Consider of my plan; for tomorrow morning will be the latest possible moment for accomplishing it. But hold—have you any ready cash about you?

DOD. Yes—a hundred pounds, given me by my wife for our intended flight.

ROB. That is lucky, for there will be a strong muster at Swallow Street to-night—of course you'll join us.

DOD. Never!—I have paid that den of infamy my last visit.

ROB. Psha! the run of ill-luck you have had lately, must turn—and will. You abandon the tables just as fortune may smile. The small sum you have about you might possibly restore you to wealth and happiness—may even save you from the necessity of adopting my suggestion.

DOD. I had resolved never to trust myself near a Gaming House again—but—but—some more money I must procure.

ROB. Yes—yes! these idle scruples avail nothing. Come, let us hasten to the temple of fortune. Courage, my friend, and she may shower thousands on us.

DOD. Fortune?—'tis fate! Tempt me no more.

ROB. (*seizing his arm.*) Must I then force thee to seize the golden prize, now 'tis within thy grasp?

DOD. I will not go. (*ROBSON drags him along.*) You goad me on to madness! How shall I atone to her who would save me?—My wife! My faithful Lucy. [*ROBSON drags him off* L. H. U. E.

Enter LUCY and OLIVIA, R. H.

LUCY. With Robson, did you say?

OLI. Yes, they have been closeted some time. (*goes to window.*) And see, they have gone out together.

LUCY. All my fond hopes then are blasted—again in the hands of that subtle villain—my husband's weakness will be mastered—and he is lost.

OLIVIA. No—no! think not for the worst; possibly Mr. Dodsworth has gone to give orders about our approaching party.

LUCY. Another piece of unnecessary extravagance, from which I could not dissuade him before our departure.

OLI. Departure?

LUCY. Yes—yes, we—(*aside*)—heavens! I must not betray our intention—we were thinking of leaving town for a short period.

Enter GEORGE CHARLTON.

GEO. C. Dearest Olivia, forgive my impatience—anxious to learn my fate—

OLI. You could not help intruding abruptly into our presence.

CHA. Forgive me—another motive beside that of love urged me hither. Oh! madam, (*to LUCY*) reports are abroad—pardon the pain I must cause you—reports are in circulation highly unfavourable to Mr. Dodsworth.—It is said he has become a confirmed gambler.

LUCY. Who dares calumniate my husband?

CHA. As a friend of my dear Olivia, I would defend Mr. Dodsworth's honour to the last, although I have not yet had the pleasure of his acquaintance; but when I hear he is the nightly inmate of a common gaming-house, I am convinced.

LUCY. Sir, you have been misinformed.

Enter PRIMMER, hastily, L. H. L. E., goes up to LUCY. OLIVIA and CHARLTON converse apart.

PR. My dear sister, I have sad news for you.

LUCY. Alas! I have much to make me sorrowful already.

PR. To your husband, Lucy, I owe every thing, and to save him from ruin I would sacrifice my life;—but I must not conceal what I know from you.

LUCY. Oh! brother, if you love me, tell me all.

PR. I hear from the best authority that he is the constant visitor of a gaming house.

LUCY. Alas! then Charlton's information is too true.

PR. More than that—he, and his agent Robson, have been offering for sale the reversion of Sir Peregrine's property, even while his benefactor lies at the point of death.

LUCY. No, no, brother, I will not believe it; my husband is not so lost to every principle of honour. And yet, what will not a gambler be guilty of? What, what is to be done? Dodsworth anticipating the benevolence of his benefactor—at this moment the inmate of a common gaming-house—brother, what am I to do?—counsel, assist me in this terrible trouble. I will brave the worst of horrors to save my husband

[OLIVIA and CHARLTON advance.

PR. No, my sister. Nothing you can do will avail.

CHA. Could I be of service?

PR. Sir, you can be of the greatest service. Does the unhappy Dodsworth know your person?

CHA. He does not.

PR. Then follow him to the gaming-house, and endeavour to persuade the wretched man to leave so vile a place?

CHA. I know a gambler's tenacity too well to hope I should succeed—no; stratagem must be resorted to.

LUCY. Ah! stratagem—then I have a thought. Forgive me, brother, if for once I forsake my sex. I will accompany Mr. Charlton—yes, disguised in male attire, Abel will not know me. (to CHARLTON.) Will you consent to my being your companion on this fearful errand?

CHA. I do—I will—but every caution must be used. I have luckily a large sum at my disposal at the present moment to effect the object we have in view.

LUCY. Thanks, a thousand thanks for your generosity. Come, brother, let us hasten and prepare this unnatural disguise. Oh, husband! husband! to what desperate expedients does not thy folly drive me!

[Exeunt CHARLTON and OLIVIA, L. Exeunt LUCY and PRIMER, R.

SCENE IV.

Room in FLOUNCE's house. Enter GIRLS, with stand, on which is gown with large hoop, another with cap, box, &c.; also a stand, chairs, tables, &c.

Enter FLOUNCE hastily with an unfinished cap.

FLO. Come, come, girls! make haste, fly, be quick—I'm worried, teased, and overpowered with work—you girl, take this rouge—to Lady Turnip, and those beauty-spots to Dowager Lady Neverdie—(Gives small parcels to 3rd girl, who exits L.)—and you must tell Miss Maypole that I can't get any hoops for her taffety skirt larger than 3 yards round; so if they won't do she must send to the cooper's.—(Exit girl with hoops L.) And as to you, go and tell that young woman that is waiting, staying, and loitering, below for work she must have patience till I have trimmed this cap.—(Exit girl, L.—Sits.)—Oh, gracious goodness, patience guide me, I'm pestered, worried, and bothered out of my life. Those three Miss Graces will go into several fits if their things are not ready for Mr. Dodsworth's rout, and I am obliged to send out all my girls with work.—Heigho! I wish I was a waiting-maid again. Poor dear Miss Platitude.

To think of her dying in a foreign land. Why, then there's those lovers of mine, I can get no peace for them—Solomon Snail has been here to tea every night for the last twenty years. But Mr. Nabs—yes, he's a smart 'un—he's so very polite, and always in such a delightful hurry. So between love and lappets, Nabs and new fashions, Snail and snippets, I'm almost driven crazy, mad, and out of my senses. Oh dear, dear, who would be a milliner with two lovers.

Song—introduced.

Enter AMELIA—FLOUNCE continues working.

FLO. So, young woman, you have come for work—well, if you can fell, tuck, gusset, do tambour work, lace work, quilt work, back stitch, cutting, and felling, and embroidery, you shall have—four-and-sixpence a-week, and find you own tea and sugar.

AME. Alas, to earn an honest livelihood I would attempt them all.

FLO. Don't be standing chattering there; if you work for me you shan't have all the talk to yourself, I can tell you.

AME. (*aside*) Should she recognize me, I am lost!

FLO. Well, I hope you have got a good character from your last place, this will be a very easy one for any young woman—only to work eighteen hours a day, and have a Sunday out every three weeks.

AME. I will endeavour to be industrious and do all I can to be useful. (*Flounce looks at her, starts up, goes nearer to her, and screams, sinking into a chair—Amelia takes her hand.*)—For heaven's sake, what ails you?

FLO. Oh dear, I shall expire—you are a ghost—I know—I know you are—let me go—you are a spectre—tell me—tell me—what's your name?

AME. My name—my name is—(*aside*)—Time and misery have not then wholly changed my features; but I must dissemble or she will know me.

FLO. Tell me this instant before I go off into a swoon—see, I'm going, I'm going.

AME. My name is Mary—

FLO. What a relief! Then you are not the ghost of my late mistress?

AME. I trust I have not alarmed you—pray forgive me.

FLO. Well, if you are not ghost, hobgoblin, or spirit, I'll hire you—there get along into the work-room, there's nobody there—take this cap and finish it.—(*Exit Amelia, R. with cap.*)—Oh dear, what a resemblance and likeness—the very image—I really thought I should have fainted, only I am so busy, I had no time, as Solomon would say. Well, to be sure, talk of the—

Enter SNAIL cautiously, L.

SNAIL. Flounce, darling! have you time to be alone?

FLO. Don't come to bother me now—I'm so taken up.

SNAIL. Been taken up? What have you been doing? Not shop-lifting, I hope.

FLO. You idiot, stupid, dolt; I mean taken up with work.

SNAIL. Then do give me time to speak upon a certain subject.

FLO. Time! why haven't you found time for the twenty years you've been courting me—yes, twenty annual years, and you have not popp'd the question yet—but no, Mr. Solomon Snail, I'm tired of you.

SNAIL. Tired of me already!

FLO. Besides, Mr. Snail, there's Nabs—he's the man, delightful, agreeable, and charming. So loving, so off-hand, so lively—why, he has popped the question a dozen times, and I've only seen him twice.

SNAIL. (*solemnly.*) Oh Flounce! You false female! Arn't you afeared of being taken up by a certain gentleman for perjury; for when you were a waiting-maid to certain parties, did I not go down certain area steps to see you every night for ten years. And have I missed one single evening in coming here at tea-time for ten years more?

FLO. And pray, Mr. Snail, why have you not made me Mrs. Snail?

SNAIL. Because I havn't had time.

Enter 1st GIRL, hastily.

Oh, Madam, here's Miss Olivia Melton on the stairs.

FLO. Miss Melton! Then I'm ruined and undone. If she finds I've got a man in the house, I am a lost milliner for ever and ever.—Solomon, Solomon, run, run for your life!

SNAIL. Run! I can't run, they won't give me time—she's on the stairs.

FLO. Oh dear! what shall I do—I have it—here, girl, help and assist me to put him on this gown—we'll turn the constable into a dressmaker.

[*They take gown with large hoop from stand, and put it on Solomon; also a cap.*]

SNAIL. Here's a situation—oh, lord! oh dear! if I was to go out in the streets in this plight I should be taken up—yes, that I should, for a naughty female.

[*He sits and pretends to sew*]

Enter OLIVIA hastily.

OLI. Oh, Flounce! pray afford me shelter from the persecutions of that odious Robson—he has followed me to your very door.

SNAIL (*pricking his finger*) Curse the needle. I've bored a large hole in my finger.

OLIVIA (*screams*) Oh, Flounce! what for mercy sake is that?

FLO. That, Miss! oh, that's!—Yes, Miss—'tis a young female I have taken apprentice. Poor thing, she's not quite proficient, used to and clever at work. Yet, Miss—please—(*aside to SNAIL*) keep quiet, or I am ruined.

SNAIL. Then don't give me such sharp needles—hand me over a blunt one—a Whitechapel six!

OLI. Is my dress for Mr. Dodsworth's party ready?

FLO. Yes, Miss. Here is the boddice—let us just see if the back part will fit. (*Places boddice against OLIVIA's back*) Here, you lazy thing, come and help (*SNAIL holds up boddice*), and we'll just put a pin in there.

[*SNAIL pulls out a large pin from his own dress, and runs it into boddice.*]

OLI. Oh! you've nearly killed me.

FLO. (*pushes SNAIL aside*) Get out, you stupid thing.

SNAIL. Get out! I only wish I had time to get out.

Enter ROBSON, L.

ROB. Pardon this interruption, but I've been driven here, fair Olivia, only by your cruelty.

OLI. Mr. Robson, your perseverance is not only useless, but I must add ungentlemanly. Flounce, let me have the cap—I will leave the presence of a person whom I cannot look upon without——

ROB. Not, I hope, without pity, Miss Melton. The pangs your coldness cause me do indeed deserve your pity.

FLOUNCE (*to the girl*) Tell the new woman in the next room to make haste with the cap. [Exit girl, L. H. U. E.]

OLI. Such pity only as you bestowed on the lost and miserable Amelia Platitude.

ROB. Ha! How, lady, heard you of her? she has been long since dead, and——

Enter AMELIA, R. sees ROBSON, and screams.

SNAIL. What, another screech! it will be my turn next to bellow out, if they give me time.

AMELIA (*recovering*) 'Tis he! my destroyer! Robson, have I found thee at last?

OLI. What means this?

ROBSON (*aside*) 'Tis she indeed—but I must dissemble.

AME. Will you, Robson, repair the wrongs you have done me?

ROB. Wrongs! Is the woman mad? I never saw her before.

FLO. Well, to be sure! I'm quite astonished and petrified: these goings on in my house will never do. Come, woman; go, go to your work.

AME. Do you not know me?

FLO. Well, now I look again—you are indeed my dear lost mistress—why did you not discover yourself at first? [Embraces her.]

ROB. You are mistaken. She is an impostor, who taking advantage of the accidental likeness of her person to Miss Platitude, would deceive you.

Enter NABS and SCRAG, the latter dressed as an officer.

NABS. Hallo! here's a row. Ten thousand pardons, ladies and gentlemen, an important communication to make to Miss Flounce. I—(*sees AMELIA*) Hallo! What, Mary, who'd ha' thought of seeing you here?

OLI. He calls her by another name—I am lost in amazement.

ROB. Oh! behold the proof of her imposition! You know her, it seems?

SCRAGS. And no mistake.

NABS. Know her, to be sure,—she's well known, for she's always a crying and sighing.

FLO. Mr. Nabs, you are mistaken. Do you think I won't believe my own vision eyes and perception? I'll tell you what, Mr. Robson, you are a villain—I don't care who hears me say so. She is Miss Platitude.

SNAIL comes forward, and slaps FLOUNCE on the shoulder.

SNAIL. That's right, Flouncy! give it 'em! they are all impostors. Why, I took that fellow up this morning for begging and stumping on a wooden leg.

OLI. This is inexplicable. I will leave, lest I should be involved in the labyrinth. [Exit, L.]

FLO. And more than that, I'll take her to her father.

AME. Oh, my father! does he still exist?

FLO. I hope so, but, alas! he is on his death-bed. You shall live with me, impostor or not.

AME. Kind girl, that cannot be.

FLO. Well, then, an asylum still remains for you, one supported and provided by the friend of your early youth.

AME. The Magdalen. Yes, thither will I repair.

FLO. Meantime your home shall be here in spite of everybody.

AME. Generous—generous girl!

NABS. What, Miss Flounce embrace a woman of that sort?

SNAIL. (*striding forward.*) She shall embrace whoever she pleases.

NABS. Who the devil are you?

SNAIL. One that will take you up, if you'll only give me time.

NABS. Oh, I see—you are one of her pals; but I'll soon settle your business. Now, Scragg, hand her off!

[*Both lay hold of SNAIL, he shews fight, scuffle, exeunt all in disorder.*]

SCENE V.

A Gaming-house. Hazard table, c., card table. R., with persons playing. Table, L., with pen and ink, glasses, &c. DODSWORTH and ROBSON at hazard, mace and shovel, and dice-box, dice, &c. Servants. BANKER.

BAN. Make your game, gentlemen. (*throws dice.*) Seven's the main.

DOD. (*throws.*) Confusion! Lost again!

ROB. Drawer, some brandy! Psha, friend, be a man! The luck must change at the next deal. Try once more; 'tis only a paltry twenty.

DOD. Madness! and I've only ten left. [*Hands cash.*]

Enter Drawer, with brandy on a salver.

ROB. Courage, friend! here is the brandy. Drink! drink! here is the brandy. [*DODSWORTH drinks and throws.*]

BAN. Make your game, gentlemen—(*throws*). Five is the main.

ROB. Six ace! Bravo! fortune smiles! Now, Dodsworth, you must win. [*Several throw in succession, ROBSON throws. DODSWORTH takes the box.*]

DOD. This cast might leave me a beggar—(*throws*). Ha! 'tis mine!

[*Takes up money frantically, advances. ROBSON rises.*]

ROB. So, I knew such would be the result. Your luck has turned. Persevere, and thousands might be yours.

DOD. No, no; this excitement is too much—it overpowers me. Some wine! some wine! [*ROBSON goes to the table.*]

ROB. (*calling to DODSWORTH.*) Here, here! a few moment's respite, and a glass of wine, will set all right. Yes, fortune will smile; believe me, the wind has set in fair. Could I but persuade you to increase our funds by means of that bond I spoke of—

Enter CHARLTON and LUCY, in male attire; they mix with the Gamesters.

DOD. Name it not; I'll not hear it.

ROB. Well, then, we must dispose of the reversion. I expect Aaron

Woolf here every moment. But see, see the sacrifice you will make, while with the other plan there will not be the chance.

[*Continues as if persuading DODSWORTH. CHARLTON and LUCY come forward.*]

LUCY, I have not seen him yet. Pray Heaven we are mistaken, and may not find him in this den of infamy.

CHA. He's certainly not among the players.

LUCY. (*sees DODSWORTH.*) Ha! false deluding hope, he is there—and Robson, too, his worse than tempter.

CHA. Dear madam, be firm, or we shall be betrayed. Retire while I accost them, and put our plans into execution.

ROB. (*apart to DODSWORTH.*) So, we have even after our evening's winnings only sixty guineas left between us, which will stand but small chance at the high rate they are playing. Think—think of my plan, I entreat you.

DOD. (*starting up.*) Robson, you have had my answer; yet something must be done, and that on the instant. I will regain what I've lost, or brave the worst!—(*with vehemence.*) You have led me into this abyss of misery, and shall release me from its toils. Money—money I will have!

ROB. (*soothingly.*) Dodsworth, this is madness! As you reject my best and wisest offer, the reversion must be resorted to. Woolf will be here, and has promised to advance a large sum on the spot. Come, come, sit—compose yourself. Take some brandy.

CHA. I am addressing Mr. Robson, I believe.

ROB. Ah! Charlton here? I thought from the circumstances that have occurred in reference to Miss Olivia Melton, you would hardly presume to address me.

CHA. I should certainly not have done you that honour, were not my purpose with you entirely a matter of business.

ROB. Business?

CHA. You are, I believe, agent for the affairs of Mr. Dodsworth?

[DODSWORTH starts.]

CHA. I heard by accident in the city this morning that you had the reversionary interest on sale on this gentleman's behalf; and having some cash for investment, I thought I would lose no time in making the first offer.

ROB. My dear sir, I had no idea ~~what~~ was your object in addressing me. A thousand pardons for my rudeness. (*Aside to DODSWORTH.*) See, the competition is strong for the investment. We shall be able to make a better bargain with this fellow than with the Jew. A thousand pardons! Permit me to introduce my principal—Mr. Dodsworth.

CHA. (*aside.*) This, then, is the victim of gaming and a false friend.

ROB. If it be not an impertinent question, are you provided with the needful? Did you bring the money.

CHA. I have a check for a large amount, which I doubt not could be changed on the spot.

[*They sit at a table, L. ROBSON pulls out papers and parchments, and writes; he at last attracts DODSWORTH'S attention, and he writes.*]

Enter WOOLF, U. E. R.

LUCY. Ah! he consents to sign away his last hope. Oh, husband! husband! thou art lost to every sense of honour! But yet our plot may take effect, and still thou may'st be saved from eternal ruin?

WOOLF. Young gentlemen, you sheem 'unhappy! Hasht lost much monish?

LUCY. I have, indeed, lost—what can never be regained!

WOOLF. Phoo! phoo! shay not so—try your fortune once more.

LUCY. Alas!

WOOLF. Excuse my freedom—but if you want monish, I'll be your friend.

LUCY. (*aside*) Can benevolence find an entrance in such a den of infamy?

WOOLF. If you want the loan of a few hundreds, come to me, I'll use you well!

LUCY. How could I repay such kindness from a stranger?

WOOLF. Repay—why, if the security's good, a bill will do—as you seein so young and inexperienced, you shall have what you want, let me shee—for fifty per cent—I'll use you vell. I'll use you vell!

[DODSWORTH, CHARLTON, and ROBSON rise, WOOLF retires.

LUCY. (*apart*) Ah! my husband approaches—I must retire—may Heaven support me 'midst this dreadful scene!

CHARLTON (*giving paper to ROBSON*) Here is the check.

ROBSON (*hands parchment*). And there the deed [*aside to Dods.*] Now, my friend, fortune smiles indeed—with such a sum as this we might break yonder bank; I'll hasten to turn this check into cash.

[Crosses to two Gamesters, who are seated R.—they rise and converse with him, pointing to CHARLTON and LUCY.

CHA. (*to DODSWORTH*.) You bear your losses, sir, like a philosopher.

DOD. Like a philosopher? By Heaven, if you knew all, you would call me a hero. Ha! ha! [*drinks.*

ROBSON (*apart to gamester, points to check*). Here's a rich booty—one worth playing—ay, and cheating for. Fix him at loo, you must make up a table without me.

SHARPS. We will draw in those pigeons, if possible.

ROB. Aye, do you solicit CHARLTON—and you, that youth: he will be an easy prey. [*LUCY, CHARLTON, and two gamesters sit with cards.*

ROB. (*to Dods.*) Now will be the time to pursue your good fortune, —they are commencing at loo—join them.

DOD. I—will—I—will—some excitement I must have to drive away these maddening thoughts. The—cards—the cards—where are they?

[Goes up to table and begins to play. WOOLF comes forward to ROBSON.

WOOLF. Dis ish not vell—you have deceived me. It was agreed dat I wash to have haf dat reversion.

ROB. But we obtained a considerable advance on your offer.

WOOLF. Vell, what if you have? I would have given double what I offered.

ROB. Your terms are exorbitant!

WOOLF. Exorbitant! what ish exorbitant? two hundred per cent is not enough for one's monish in dese hard times?

CHA. (to Dods) You are loo'd on your deal.

DOD. Distraction! will there be no limit to my losses?

CHA. Perhaps not, my friend, at unlimited leo.

DOD. Here, take my money—take it! [*Gives money to CHARLTON.*]

Drawer, some brandy.

[*Exit servant.*]

ROB. (aside) Now will be the time—[*aloud to WOOLF*] you know Lord Chesterton, of course?

WOOLF. I know dat his credit is good in de city, his word is safe for thousands.

ROB. But his bond is still better—eh, Aaron?

WOOLF. Ah! what! ish he coming to us? famous news! If he whants to sheek our *benevolence*, send him to me—I'll ushe him well—but have you any thing to do for him?

ROB. I have a bond for something over four thousand pounds.

WOOLF. Ah, dat will make good profits!

[*Dodsworth starts up frantically, they all rise from table.*]

DOD. Villains! Cheats! Magicians! you have completed my ruin—where is my tempter—where is the villain who has led me on to this? Oh! let me tear him peicemeal!

[*Rushes upon ROBSON.*]

ROB. Madman! what now?

LUCY. I can preserve this disguise no longer—I will discover to him who I am.

[*CHARLTON holds her back.*]

CHA. Madam! what would you do?—be calm, all is well,—we have won the bulk of his losses, and I have the deed of reversion safe—our object is attained—let us now retire.

DOD. (points to LUCY) See! see! wretch! tempter! villain! even my own Lucy—my wife, is caught in your toils.

CHA. (to LUCY) Heavens! you are recognised! let us quit this den of despair on the instant.

[*Drags her off, she resisting, &c. &c.*]

ROB. Dodsworth, hear reason.

DOD. Reason—what have I to do with reason? Am I not sunk into the uttermost depth of misery and despair—reason! that has fled from me. My brain is on fire—hideous forms pass before my eyes—I no longer see all here as men, but demons of the blackest dye. My treacherous vision pictured her! Her villain, who clings to me in sorrow, and would follow me even to death—she has tracked me here—my head reels—I am growing frantic—mad!—mad!

[*Sinks into a chair exhausted.*]

ROB. Your eyes do deceive you, no woman can gain admittance here.

WOOLF. Ah! dish is the effects of gaming—why don't peoples use their money honestly, ash ve do, eh! Mr. Robson?

ROB. (apart to WOOLF) Retire for a while, and you will find your visit here has not been useless after all—Dodsworth holds his Lordship's bond, he will want money on it presently.

[*Sharps comes forward.*]

WOOLF. Vell, he can't come to vone more fair dealing a Aaron Woolf.—I'll use him well.

[*Retires.*]

SHARPS. (apart to ROBSON) Those two pigeons who have left us must have had the devil's luck and their own too; we have only been able to secure a few paltry hundreds.

ROB. Ah! you might have done better—but remember, I shall know

the exact sum lost, and the precise amount coming to me, for my own share.

SHARPS. What! Robson, do you doubt our honour?

[Places hand on breast.
 ROB. No—no! It is all right—I doubt not—forgive me; make up a party at the hazard-table. I am planning a rich booty for us all.—(Sharps retires. ROBSON goes to DODSWORTH, and places his hand on his shoulder.) My friend, do not despond—one other hope remains.

Enter CROUPIER—arranges hazard-table—Gamesters play.

DOD. Hope!—who talks to a ruined gamester of hope?—'Tis false! there is no such feeling in the world for me—I am undone for ever!

ROB. 'Tis, indeed, too true; money you must have, and that at once. Miller's bill will be presented to-morrow morning.

DOD. Misery upon misery falls upon my devoted head.—(ROBSON pulls paper out of his pocket.)—(aside) Now is the propitious moment.—(lays paper before DODSWORTH abruptly)—This bond!

DOD. What bond?

ROB. Hush! speak lower!—his Lordship's bond!

DOD. Haunt me not with such devilish schemes—I will not consent—

ROB. Pshaw! 'Twill be only in nature of a loan, and for so short a time too; do, I implore, for your own sake what I advise. 'Tis but to write one word, and your distresses vanish on the instant. Woolf is at hand with the cash, and I pledge myself that the bond shall be redeemed in two days.

DOD. (rising) I will not do it!

ROB. Remember the acceptance you must meet. Think of yourself immured in a jail—your wife enduring every privation!

DOD. Ah! the thought of her drives me to distraction.—(ROBSON takes his hand and pulls him to the table.)—Here! here, take a pen—no one observes us—(puts pen into his hand)—One word here! here, in this corner, and your fortune's made for ever. [DODSWORTH writes, music.

ROB. 'Tis done!—Woolf—Woolf—

[WOOLF comes forward—ROBSON hands him bond—he returns bank notes—Picture is formed, and Curtain falls.

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

A Ball-Room in DODSWORTH's House splendidly fitted up and illuminated. Chairs, &c.

Enter PRIMMER in full dress, L., meets LUCY, elegantly attired, B.

PRIM. Sister, I bring you news that will cause you both joy and sorrow.

LUCY. What has happened?

PRIM. Sir Peregrine Platitude is no more!

LUCY. At another time our benefactor's loss would have grieved me to

the heart: but now, as that event will restore my dear husband to wealth and happiness, I cannot help feeling joy, even at the expense of gratitude. Ah! Dodsworth approaches, you had better retire.—(*Enter DODSWORTH in full dress, R.—(aside)*) I dare not break the news to him too suddenly. Come, husband—(*lays hand on shoulder*)—This evening will see you bid farewell to extravagance and imprudence of every kind!

DOD. True! this will be the last time I shall meet my friends around the social board; I have resolved to leave England for ever.

LUCY. What if I should be able to alter your determination?

DOD. 'Twas you who suggested it.

LUCY. Dearest husband, our troubles are at length ended—you are again possessed of an ample fortune.

DOD. How?

LUCY. The good, the generous, Sir Peregrine has breathed his last, and his estate is settled on you.

DOD. Ah! (*starts frantically*) This combination of terrors I can bear no longer! My brain bursts, I cannot preserve my senses!—O! that I had died ere I was destined to dash the cup of happiness from such an angel's lips! Lucy, wronged, devoted woman, still we are beggars. The property is no longer mine!—you smile! O! do not mock my agony—I have sold the reversion of the estate, and—O! dreadful thought!—lost the proceeds at a gaming-table—still you smile—you mock me,—you see the wreck—the ruin I have made, without a tear?

LUCY. Husband!

DOD. Ah! you are going to curse me!—O, no! no! no! Fly from me—abandon your wretched guilty partner! But O! do not! do not curse me! Let me still have thy compassion.

LUCY. O! this is too much! My love—my devoted love—is thine for ever!

[*Embraces him.*]

DOD. What means this?—Can'st love a wretched guilty beggar?

LUCY. Listen patiently.

DOD. I say I have sold—gambled away my interest in this property!

LUCY. I know you have!

DOD. It is now possessed by a stranger!

LUCY. Am I then a stranger to my Abel?

DOD. You?—But hold—in my madness I have not spoken plainly. No, no! your innocent mind cannot conceive the excess of folly and guilt that has been mine. Know then that the deed of reversion—

LUCY (*producing it*) Is here!! (*Dod. is for a moment transfixed with wonder*)—Yes, by the assistance of my brother and Charlton, I tracked you to your haunts, disguised in male attire.

DOD. Then it was no vision of my distracted brain.

LUCY. We not only bought this deed, but won most of the money of you afterwards. See, dear husband, so thin is the veil that covers villainy and cheating, that even a poor weak woman can overmatch professed gamblers.

DOD. (*falls on her neck*) O! my dear, devoted wife, I cannot speak—gratitude choaks my utterance—

LUCY. You need not, dearest Abel. Come, our company is arriving—let us hasten to receive them.

DOD. How can I reward this more than heroism?

LUCY. By quitting the company of that vile Robson, and changing the character of a man of fashion and a gamester for that of a kind husband— (*Music*)—but hark!—the dance commences. Hide this emotion, for you must now play the host, and wear the smile of welcome. [*Exeunt, L.*
] *Company come forward, and form to dance. They dance a cotillon.*

Enter Servant, announcing.

The three Miss Graces.

[*They enter, L.*

TABI. To think of Olivia's milliner turning out no better than she should be. [*Enter OLIVIA, R. U. E.*

JEM. Horrible!

FATI. Quite indelicate.

OLI. Oh! my dear aunt, I hope you have got over the fright I gave you about that detestable Robson.

TABI. At last we have had the help of a bottle of strong water.

Enter DOD, and LUCY, they mix with Company.

Enter Servant, announcing.

Mr. Bozz, and—

[*Enter Pozz, L. pulls Servant off.*

Bozz. Stop, you loon! I will announce my illustrious friend, myself! Ladies and gentlemen, the greatest philosopher, the most profound scholar, and benevolent moralist of the age, approaches to shed the light of his beneficent wisdom on all around! Doctor Pozz is in the entry!

Enter DR. POZZ.

Pozz. Bozz, find me a seat.

[*Bozz hands chair, and POZZ seats himself.*

Re-Enter Servant, announcing MR. GEORGE CHARLTON and MR. PRIMMER, they enter.

Bozz. Sir, here is Mr. Primmer.

Pozz. Well, what of him?

Bozz. He is a printer—you owe much to the printers, doctor.

Pozz. Ha! the printers owe more to me.

Bozz. (*aside to PRIMMER.*) See with what condescending affability this great genius utters his delicate reproofs. Let me hasten to put his ponderous wit, his awful wisdom, upon record. (*takes out tablets and writes.*) Mr. Charlton, you are a happy man.

CHA. I shall be when I behold my dear Olivia. Ah! she is here.

[*Goes to OLIVIA, PRIMMER joins company.*

A pas de deux; after which, enter ROBSON, hastily, seeks out DODSWORTH, draws him on one side.

ROB. Alas! my unhappy friend, all is discovered! Fly on the instant.

DOD. What—what is discovered?

ROB. The wily Woolf took the bond to Lord Chesterton, and—

Enter WOOLF, followed by NABS and SCRAG.

WOOLF. Here, here they are, secure them both.

NABS. Don't be in such a hurry, Mr. Woolf—I know my duty. (*aside.*) I say, Sam, this is an unpleasant affair, 'cause we know Robson before to-day to be about the biggest villain in our district.

SCRAG. And no mistake.

NABS. So, if poor Dodsworth—who is a gentleman, and once did me a good turn, should knock us down and try to escape, don't you be in a hurry to get up again.

SCRAG. I von't, and no mistake.

LUCY. What—what do I hear?

NABS. Pray, don't alarm yourself, madam; we have only come on a trifling matter of business to Mr. Dodsworth.

[*Robson tries to retire.*]

SCRAG. (*collars him.*) No you don't, my covey; you're in the mess.

WOOLF. (*shows bond.*) Yes, you must be secured, as the witness.

NABS. (*apart to DODSWORTH.*) I should be sorry to do any thing in this awkward business in the least unhandsome. Your doors are all open, and the rooms crowded—if you could find it convenient to take a walk and not come back.

DODS. I am bewildered! what means this intrusion?

[*All the company crowd round.*]

WOOLF. It means that we have a warrant against you and Robson.

LUCY. In heaven's name, for what?

WOOLF. For forgery!

OMNES. Forgery!

[*All the company start. DODSWORTH stares wildly round as if stunned, and falls lifeless on the stage.*]

LUCY. (*screams*) Heavens, my husband!

[*She kneels and tries to recover him.*]

TABLEAU AND CLOSE IN.

SCENE II.

A Room in Flounce's House. Chairs, &c.

Enter FLOUNCE, leading on AMELIA, who is in tears.

AME. My only parent dead, passed from this world ere I could obtain his blessed forgiveness.

FLO. Yes, but cheer up, and don't cry.—Though Sir Peregrine has left all his cash, money, and property, away from you yet it is bestowed on one—

AME. Who seems destined to be my benefactor. My being penniless does not distress me; for what could a fallen creature like me hope to expect from a censorious world?

FLO. O! if you had plenty of money, you would be thought, esteemed, and believed to be, what you really are—the best creature in the world.

AME. No, no—my father's heir has ever been my best friend, and is even now made the instrument of my last hope, my one remaining comfort. Yes, Frounce, I am resolved! I will end my days in that pile raised by the hand of charity, to shelter and reform the victims of lost virtue, supported so unceasingly by my early and only friend Dodsworth. I will breathe my last prayer for his happiness in the Magdalen.

Enter SOLOMON SNAIL, running.

SNAIL. Oh, dear! oh, lord! such news!—horrible! will make your hair stand on end like a broom stuck upside down.

FLO. What—what's the matter? Make haste, inform, and let us hear.

SNAIL. There!—there you go again; you never will give me time. Why, what do you think?—prepare to be astonished—both of you'll go into fits.

AME. What—what has happened?

SNAIL. (*takes them both beside him confidentially.*) Well, then, not to keep you in suspense, what do you think?

FLO. Think!—that you will be “going” to tell us all day, and we shall never know, after all.

SNAIL. Well, then—but don't be in a fright, don't swoon—certain parties are taken up for forgery?

FLO. What certain parties?

Enter NABS, running.

NABS. I come to inform you of the unpleasant duty that has lately devolved upon me.

SNAIL. I know what you mean, and if you'd only give me time I was going to tell it myself.

NABS. In one word, Mr. Dodsworth and Robson have been found guilty of forgery.

FLO. Mr. Dodsworth!

AME. Robson!—tell me all of him, I pray.

NABS. Why, Robson has turned evidence against his friend to screen himself, like a false fellow as he ever has been, but he will meet his reward yet. The mob is so infuriated against him, that his life is in danger.

AME. In danger! Robson's life threatened, though he deserted and abandoned me. In his last hour of trouble *I will succour him!* Yes, he shall see that, though spurned, neglected, woman's love is the same for ever! I will seek him out. [*Exit.*]

FLO. I am quite astonished, horrified, terrified out of my wits, at this news.

NABS. Yes, it is all over with poor Mr. Dodsworth—and so it will be with me, Mistress Frounce, if you don't listen to my suit. [*Takes her hand.*]

SNAIL. (*pushing him back*) Stand off, Mr. Bow Street runner—don't think to run away with my Frounce, I won't give you time! She's mine, or rather will be (*looking towards Frounce*) if certain parties will consent.

FLO. Well, really, I am so flustered about this affair of poor Mr.

Dodsworth, that though I've made up my mind for these ten years, I hardly know what to say.

NABS. Then I'll tell you.—Say, Mr Nym Nabs, you are a very pleasant, worthy, clever sort of a person, and—

SNAIL. Don't you go telling such abominable falsehoods. Flounce, you'll have me, of course.

FLO. Well, to end all disputation, botheration, confabulation, I'll have you both.

SNAIL. Both! why, we shall have to take you up for bigamy.

FLO. I'll have you for a husband, Snail—and you Mr. Nabs for a friend.

SNAIL (*embracing FLOUNCE*) Oh! if I only had time I'd smother you with kisses!

NABS. And as I see no help for it, I'll agree to the conditions. Snail, your hand. [*They join hands.*]

FLO. Now that's just the exact, precise, and identical thing that I wanted; I'll set about the wedding-dresses, and you, Mr. Nabs, must come to the wedding dinner;—come along, Snail.

NABS. Though I don't repine, Miss Flounce, I think the loss of a wife is hardly made up for, by the gain of a dinner! But it's all right—you shall be Mr. Snail's wife, and I'll be Mr. Snail's wife's friend, and Mr. Snail's friend, too, for the matter of that; so good by for the present.

BOTH. Good bye! [*Erit, L. Exeunt, R.*]

SCENE III.

A Room. Practicable Door in F., from which OLIVIA meets CHARLTON, who enters L. U. E.

OLI. Alas! this constant toil and watching will bring her to the grave.

CHA. Dearest Olivia, the unwearied exertions and sacrifices you make in this unhappy cause, doubly endear me to thee! Where is Mrs. Dodsworth?

OLI. In deep consultation with the great doctor concerning the petition she is to present to Her Majesty. See! behold her, careworn but unwearied to the last. [*Points off D. in F.*]

CHA. Cannot she be persuaded to take any rest?

OLI. None! Since her husband's condemnation she has been unremitting in her exertions to procure a remission of his dreadful sentence—she now waits to learn the decision of the twelve judges on the points of law reserved concerning the legality of Robson's evidence.

CHA. Detestable wretch! who first leads his victim to the commission of crime, and then basely becomes an evidence against him, though the more guilty of the two.

Enter PRIMMER, L.

PR. All our fond hopes are blighted! The evidence of Robson has been pronounced conclusive and legal—Dodsworth's days are numbered.

Enter LUCY, D. in L. rushes forward to him.

LUCY. O, my brother! what has been decided?

PRY. The worst, and there is no hope left.

LUCY. Then it is decided that he, the partner of my life, is to die the death of a felon. *[Bursts into tears.]*

CHA. This last stroke will end her sufferings. Support—support her; she sinks under the weight of her new calamity.

LUCY *(kneels)* Merciful heaven, grant me but strength to conquer a woman's weakness in these dreadful hours of agony and suspense; now that the light of hope is fast receding from my soul, grant me to bear with fortitude the trying scenes my cruel fate has yet reserved for me!—*(rises.)* My friends, I'll to the Queen. She is a woman—a wife—in her breast the last ray of pity is not yet extinct. My petition is ready.

PRY. Noble sister, though thy husband's pardon has been denied by the tribunals of his country, yet our sovereign might still be merciful. There is much to hope, for the Lord Mayor and the Common Council of London have prepared a petition in Dodsworth's behalf.

OLI. Yes, my friend, there is comfort yet.

PRY. The Earl Percy also is at this moment on his way to court with the signatures of twenty-two thousand persons, praying for the life of Dodsworth.

LUCY. May heaven reward them! But I must not sink; now that my best energies will be required my task must be performed; the destiny of a faithful wife must be fulfilled.

PRY. And here, I have procured an order from the sheriffs for you to see—

LUCY *(anxiously)* See, see! whom—my husband? *(takes paper)* Yes, I shall behold my dear Abel—shall see him face to face—dry his tears, and pour the balm of consolation into his troubled heart. Let me hasten—not a moment shall be lost. Oh, my brother! this is more than I could hope, for 'tis giving me a glimpse of heaven in this abyss of despair. Let me not lose one instant, my prayer is answered; that thought, the thought of seeing him, gives strength to my resolves, firmness to my tottering frame. Come, come, my friends, let us depart. O, my husband! I come, I come! *[Exit hastily, D. in F.]*

PRY. Noble devotion, may heaven reward thy exertions.

[Exit R. with OLIVIA.]

SCENE IV.

St. James's Palace. An anti-chamber, practicable steps in centre, an arch with red curtains to draw, steps carpeted red, two Beef-eaters on each side of steps. Enter a Deputation of Gentlemen, with roll of papers, L.

Enter from curtains, Lord in Waiting, with wand.

LORD IN W. Gentlemen, may I have the honour to acquaint the Privy Council with your business?

LORD M. It is to present a petition in favour of Abel Dodsworth, at present a condemned criminal in his Majesty's jail of Newgate.

[Lord in Waiting bows, and retires behind curtain.]

Enter Bozz and Pozz.

Bozz. Indeed, my illustrious friend, the zeal you show in the unhappy Dodsworth's case does honour to your feelings.

Pozz. Phoo! Phoo! What do you know about *my* feelings? There is no honour in the matter. 'Tis our duty to help the afflicted; and I am happy to find that the Lord Mayor of the city of London knows his duty so well.

Enter Lord in Waiting from curtain, motions gentlemen, who retire up steps, and exeunt through curtain.

Bozz. I hear the Earl Percy has presented a petition to his Majesty signed by twenty-two thousand persons. Do you think the King ought to pardon Dodsworth, in answer to the prayer of so many persons?

Pozz. "No arbiter of life and death hath ever been censured for granting the life of a criminal to honest and powerful solicitation."

Re-enter, from curtain, Lord in waiting, and Deputation—they walk slowly down steps, and seem dejected; they exeunt, R., Lord in Waiting manet.

Bozz. To judge from their looks the petition has not been entertained favourably.

Pozz. The wife's petition will have the greatest effect, and to give her courage and countenance I have come here. 'Tis time she had arrived.

Enter Recorder, Sheriffs, Law Officers, &c. L. They walk up steps, presented by Lord in Waiting, and exeunt.

Bozz. The Recorder with the fatal report.

Pozz. Let us hope that the result will be favourable, and that "Justice will be satisfied with ruin, imprisonment, exile, infamy, and penury," and that the unhappy culprit's life will be spared.

Enter Lucy with papers.

Bozz. Be of good heart, Madam, your petition might be destined to save a husband's life.

Pozz. I have sent a message to her Majesty, soliciting the interview you require.

Lucy. Doctor, a wife's best gratitude is yours. Pray heaven this petition, composed by your benevolence and wisdom, may take effect.

Enter Lord in Waiting, from curtain.

LORD IN W. Mistress Dodsworth, her Majesty is graciously pleased to command your attendance.

Lucy. Husband! dear husband! I fly to save thee!

[Lucy rushes up steps; curtains are suddenly drawn, discovering the Queen; Lucy throws herself at her feet, presenting petition.

Mercy! mercy!

[POZZ kneels, R., and Lord in Waiting kneels upon steps.

SCENE V.

A Street. Enter OLIVIA and CHARLTON, R. H. U. E.

CHA. Let us hasten to seek Mrs. Dodsworth, and learn with what success her efforts have been crowned; then return with her to a wretched husband.

Enter PRIMMER, hastily, R. H. L. E.

PR. Alas! my friends, horrors crowd thick upon us! Vengeance has reached the destroyer.

OLI. Whom?

PR. Robson! The worst of vengeance, that of Heaven! When he left the court, the mob, infuriated by his treachery, would have torn him piecemeal but for the protection of officers. She whom he had most wronged—the devoted Amelia—sought him out to minister to his wants, but it was too late; he had taken poison! Come, let us hasten to the abode of misery, to hear the fate of our wretched friend. [*Exeunt, R. L. E.*]

SCENE VI.

Condemned Cell, Newgate; table, chairs, &c. DODSWORTH discovered fettered, at table.

DOD. "And can it be? or is it all a dream—a vapour of the mind? I scarce believe myself awake or acting. Sudden this—am I?—So compassed round with comforts late—health, freedom, peace—torn, torn from all, and lost!—a prisoner in—Impossible! I sleep—'tis fancy's coinage—'tis dream's delusion!" Vain dream, vain fancy! Quickly I am roused to all the dire reality's distress. I am condemned to die! Merciless doom! Yet, what is life to me? 'Twere happiness to die—to be released from all the sufferings I endure. But for thee, my own devoted wife, my Lucy, I would smiling meet my fate.—(*noise of bolts withdrawn, L.*) Ah! some one approaches!

Enter Jailor, followed by DR. POZZ, L. Jailor bows, and exit. L.

This kindness to a fallen wretch like me is noble, Doctor. (*rises.*)

POZ. (*grasps his hand.*) So 'tis the duty of every man to give his best support on such occasions as these. The Lord Mayor and Common Council of London have thought it their duty, so have the members and objects of the various charitable institutions you have established and supported, besides twenty-two thousand of your fellow subjects, and who have all cheerfully come forward to alleviate your distress, to commiserate your situation, and palliate your crime.

DOD. Doctor, tell me, for the sake of a beloved wife, and for her sake only, is there hope?

POZ. There may be; but do not nourish it. Should it be blighted, the fate you may be destined for will fall with double bitterness on your soul!

DOD. What have I done to share so terrible a fate?

POZ. 'Tis generally believed the doom of death is more than is deserved for the crime of forgery, and I confidently predict that the time is not far distant when, by a merciful legislation, some lesser punishment will be thought sufficient to protect the commercial interests of the country.

DOD. Pray Heaven it may be! Let us hope, if my doom be sealed, that I may be the last victim to so harsh a law—*(noise of bolts, L.)*—Ah! that noise, perchance—yes, yes, it is my Lucy.

[Enter LUCY—*rushes into DOD.'s arms—a long pause*—POZZ. *retires to table.*

LUCY Speak, speak to me, Abel—let me hear thy voice, if only to sound the accents of despair.

DOD. Alas! they will tear me from thee.

LUCY O! no, no, no! I have seen her Majesty—there is all to hope from her—yes, she who feels so well the blessings of a good and tender husband, has shed the full light of her pity on our sufferings.

DOD. O! my devoted wife, when I am gone heaven will reward thee for thy faith and love to me.

LUCY It will reward me now; yes, they will restore thee unfettered to these arms. Justice will be satisfied with exile—even as a transported convict, still thou wilt be mine. I shall be always near thee to cheer thy labour, and minister to thy wants. Firm in each other's love, each pang for all we have lost, each hopeless wish for home and comfort, will lose its bitterness.

DOD. Oh! What is death to this, to parting with thee? Thy more than human constancy, thy untiring faith? Lucy, the mercy of heaven reaches us even in the hour of death, and fills the sinking soul with brightest hope! We shall meet again!

LUCY Yes, yes, they will pardon thee!

DOD. This cruel separation will be short—we shall next meet in realms beyond the reach of human vengeance—of earth's error—*(points upward)*—where none can tear thee from me! [Embraces her fervently.]

Enter JAILER, followed by CHA., OLI., and PRIM.—JAILER bows and exits, L.

POZZ This is a painful moment, Mr. Primmer.

PRIM. Alas! it is.

DOD. For all your kindness, my friends, you have my heartfelt thanks—those, perhaps, of a dying man. Olivia, may you be happy with Charlton—but O! be kind to her. [Points to LUCY.]

PRIM. All our hopes are not blighted yet, still you may be saved.

Enter R. Recorder, Sheriff, and Clergyman.

LUCY Ah! support me, heaven; the terrible moment has arrived—our fate hangs on their lips—*(clings to DOD., and looks with earnest anxiety to clergyman.)*

POZZ. *(to DODs.)* Be firm—hear the Recorder's report with christian fortitude. Remember, sooner or later all must die.

CLER. *(with paper)* Abel Dodsworth, it is my painful duty to inform you that the Recorder has made his report, and I am sorry to add that the result is unfavourable

LUCY Then his doom is—

RECORDER Death!!!

[A long pause.]

[LUCY screams, and falls lifeless on Stage—DOD. kneels with clasped hands, looking upwards—OLIVIA falls on CHARLTON'S shoulder—CHARLTON covers his face with his hand—POZZ stands with one hand raised—and on a Tableau thus formed

CURTAIN FALLS.

Epilogue

BY

MARK LEMON, Esq.

Enter at opposite sides, MR. HONNOR and CALL-BOY.

MR. HONNOR.

Call Mr. Cooper—

C. B.

Mr. Cooper, sir, stage waits for you.

[*Exit.*

Enter MR. COOPER with MS. in hand.

MR. COOPER.

Well, sir, my part is ended—here's my cue.

[*Refers to MS. and reads.*

"Tears hair—wife screams—"

MR. HONNOR. (*interrupting.*)

Our author here—

Unhappy wight!—is petrified with fear,
In case the audience should to-night produce
The good old pantomime of "*Mother Goose*;"
'Twould be no joke to him—you comprehend.
Now, Mr. Cooper, will you stand his friend?

MR. COOPER.

If, sir, my feeble powers can aid the weak,
And I've permission from the house to speak.

[*Exit MR. HONNOR.*

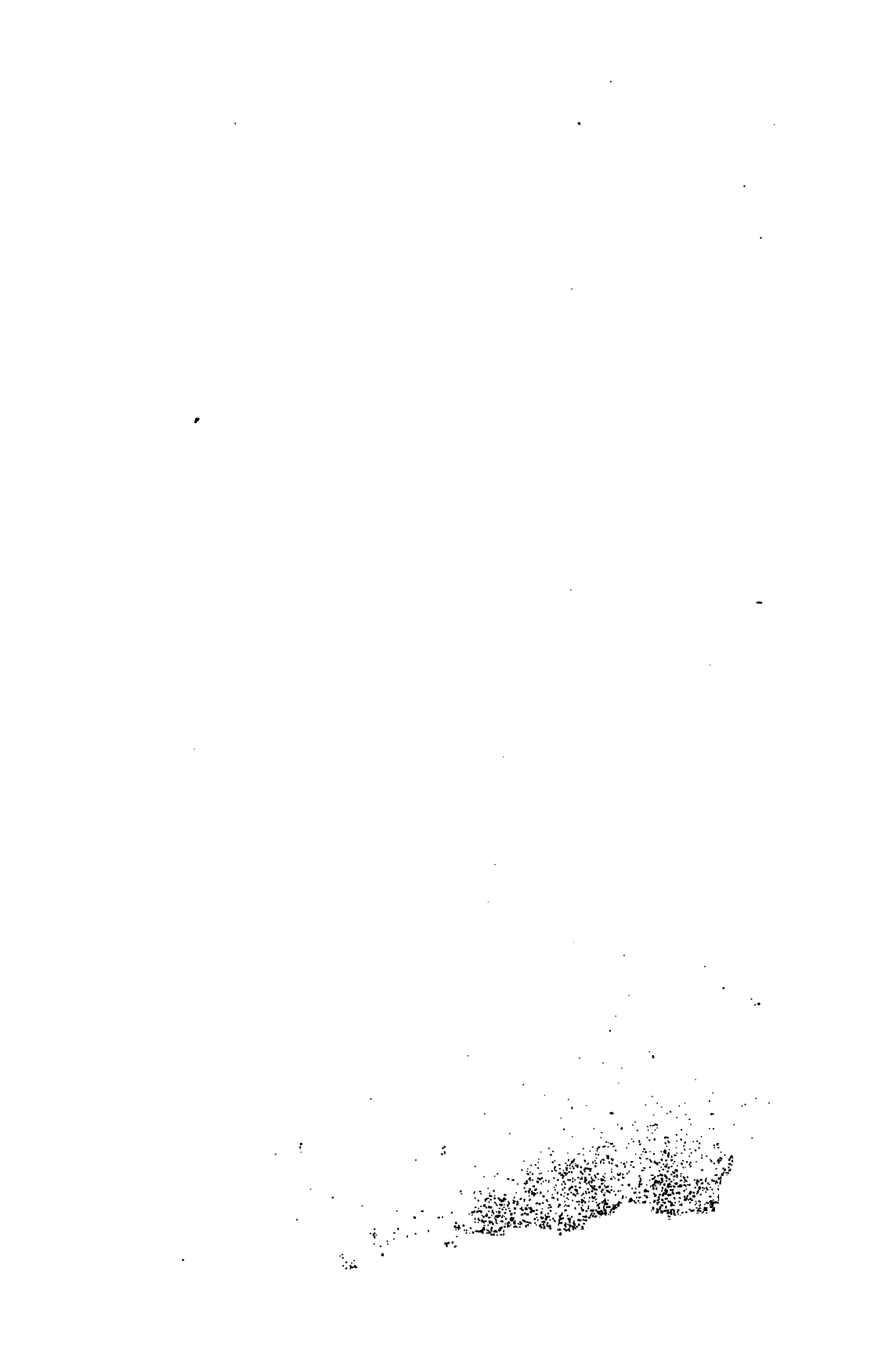
MR. COOPER. (*advances.*)

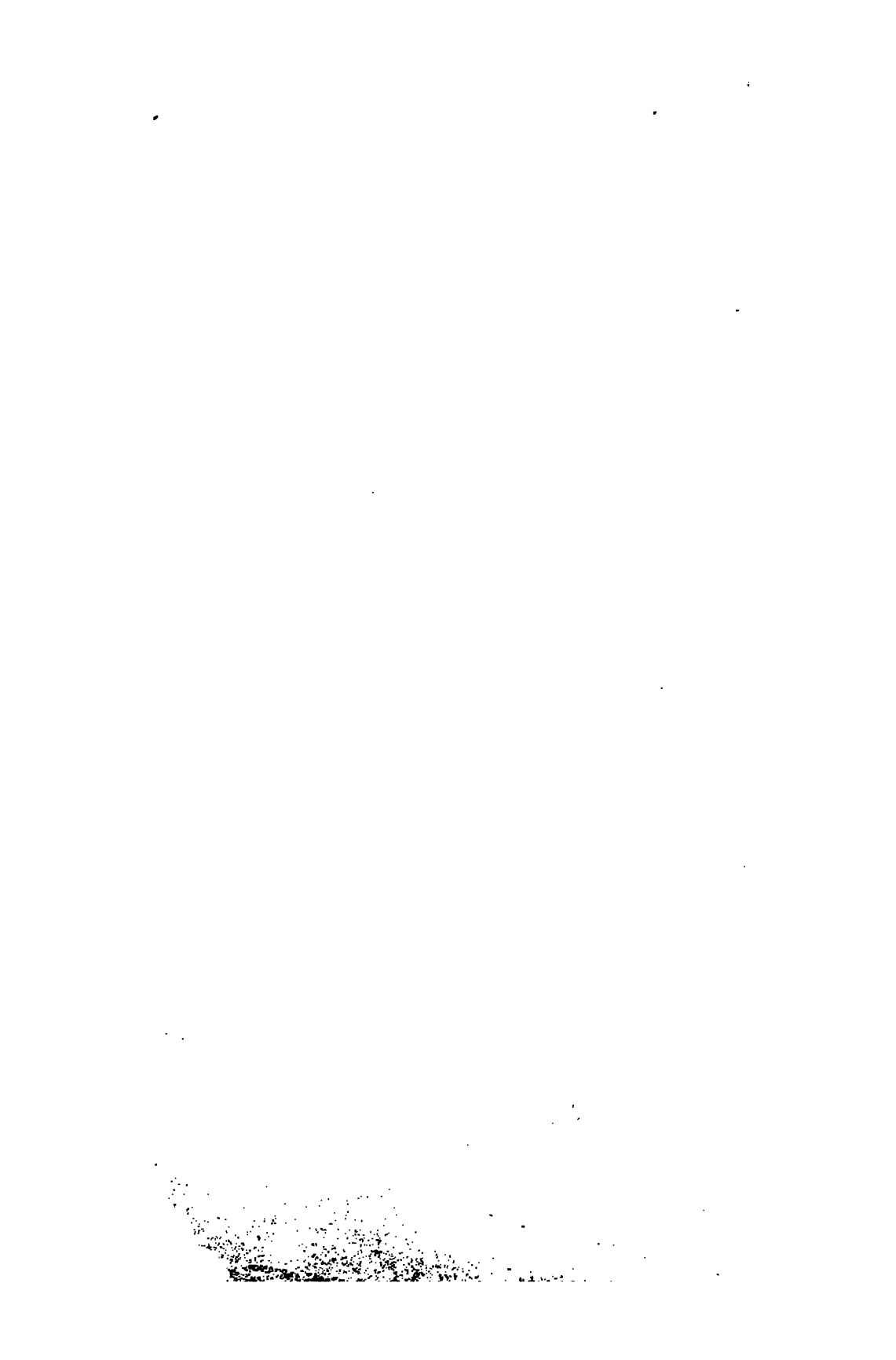
No steel-clad hero, and no tinsel'd queen
With long hexameters have fill'd our scene,
But broad-cloth coats—cock'd hats and silken hose,
Have here been joined to nature's humble prose;

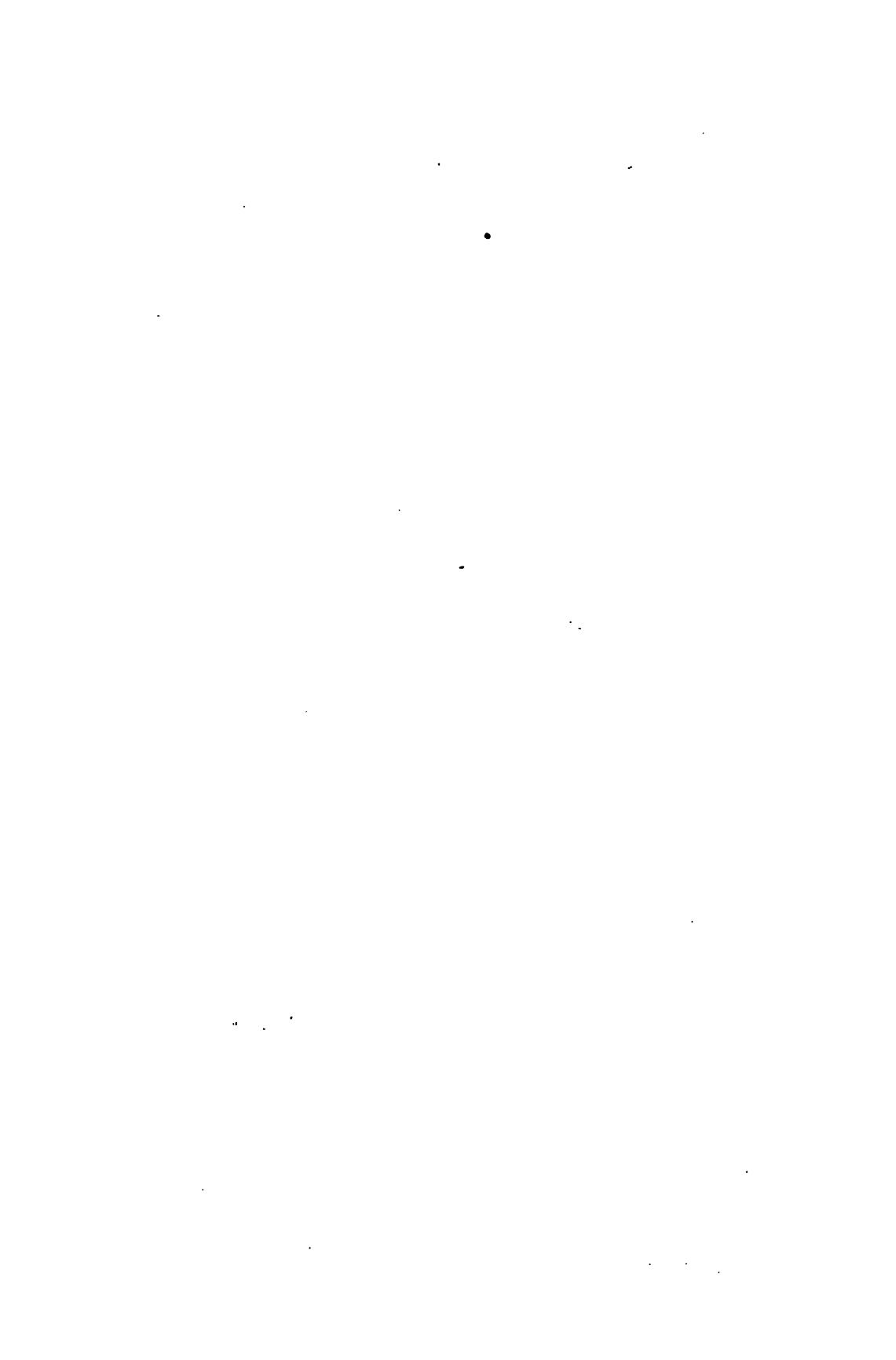
EPILOGUE.

For as she prompted so the scene was wrought,
Without one mighty, mystifying thought.
Our author fears his drama's simple dress
May fail to please—at least may please ye less
Than if in spangl'd robes and pompous line,
He'd made his *Dram. Personæ* spout and shine.
But he who stands for judgment here to-night
Had but a grey-goose quill wherewith to write;
No eagle's pinion that could dare aspire
To touch the sun, and give the line its fire,
His only aim was to engage the heart
With scenes of life where all might take a part.

O! let your verdict own our author right,
And be *empanell'd, Bozians*, every night;
And let the Pit be foremost in our cause,
To show how well they estimate the "laws;"
Whilst ye, just gods! that fill the upper sphere,
In "*thunders*" speak, but be they *plaudits* here.







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